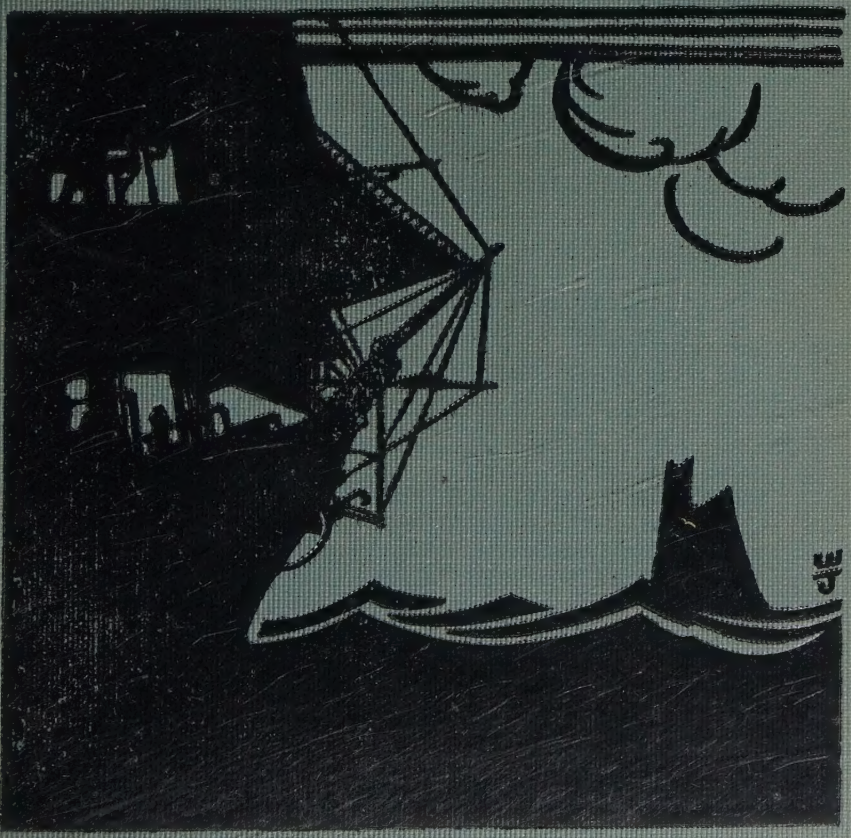
A Sailor of Fortune

Personal Memoirs of

CAPT. B. S. OSBON

Albert Bigelow Paine



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PERSONAL MEMOIRS OF CAPTAIN B. S. OSBON

BY

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

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Foreword

In preparing these chapters I have endeavoured faithfully to preserve certain annals of a remarkable life. It has been my privilege to set them down from the lips of the narrator, only amplifying from such reports and records as would complete the pictures and give them connection and adequate setting.

In so far as possible the effort has been to retain the phraseology in which the stories were told to me, though no literary skill of mine could adequately reproduce the inimitable manner of the telling—the modulation of speech, the play of countenance, the subtle humour that was as often a matter of the inflection as of the word. These things the reader will have to imagine, each in his own way.

The book is history—some of it unwritten history heretofore—of our own land. Its subject has helped to make that history, and in thus allowing it to be recorded has added a further service to the nation he has served so faithfully and well.

Albert Bigelow Paine

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A Sailor of Fortune

I

Then and Now

ONE reason why I have seen so much is this: when as a sailor I went ashore "on opportunity," instead of steering straight for a gin-mill I strolled off to get some idea of the port and of the manners and customs of the people. When I returned to the ship I was regarded as a sort of encyclopædia of general information, and I kept my knowledge fresh by frequently turning it over. That is why I have remembered.

Another thing,—there was a good deal more to see in those early days. Pirates, cannibals, and mutineers abounded, and added romance, and even zest, to a seafaring life. The steam and telegraph were unknown and strange things took place on the high seas, which never could happen in these days of shortened time and quick communication. The Pacific Ocean was then a vast and almost uncharted mystery into which men and vessels disappeared, to be heard of no more for months, for years, perhaps forever. News was the rarest thing we knew—next, reading matter. A small piece of newspaper would be read and re-read by every sailor on board. When we visited other ships it was called "gamming," and the first question asked was, "Have you seen any whales?" and then, "Have you anything to read?" The Bible was read in our

forecastle, from end to end, seven times within a period of eighteen months. Messages from home—did not come. I was once absent five years and eight months and returned without knowing whether a single member of my family was alive.

You will see how different things were then. The ocean was a world unto itself—the law of the sea was not like the law of the land. The story of much that happened in that time would be set down now as a "sailor's yarn," but nothing which a sailor could invent would be more marvellous than the simple truth, and this, as I saw it, I shall try to tell.

II

The Making of a Sailor

MY great-grandfather's name was Osborne—a manufacturer of corn brooms at old Hadley, Massachusetts. In those days it was customary for broom-makers to use a burning-brand in marking their goods, and my ancestor, requiring one, sent for it to Boston. There is no doubt but that he was a very poor penman. The maker of brands deciphered his name as "Osbon," and thus it was spelled on the brand which in due time reached Hadley.

Now it was a long journey to Boston and back in those days, and the season was far advanced. Moreover, burning-brands were expensive. The old gentleman was anxious to get his goods on the market and could afford neither the time nor the money for another experiment, so he changed his name to fit the burning-brand. It is a curious thing that the branch of the family which adopted this abbreviated name has been of an entirely different brand from those who retained the two missing letters. Perhaps I might mention here that my great-grandmother was the first white woman born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

For myself, I was born of poor but Methodist parents, August 16th, 1827, at Rye, Westchester County, New York, and was the son of a minister, who in

those days moved every year. Perhaps it was because of this that I inherited a roving disposition.

I spent every summer of my childhood life at my great-grandfather's farm in Saratoga County, where the battle of Bemis Heights was fought. At the time a great many Indians lived in that section of the State, and a large number had quartered themselves on my great-grandfather's domains. In fact, we saw more Indians than we did white folk. They grew to be very fond of me and used to take me off to their camp; and I was fond of going in their canoes. They made me for my special use a little birch-bark craft, probably five or six feet long. I soon became an adept in canoe paddling, and when they missed me at the house they would send one of the men over to the camp after me, and I was usually found in a canoe. This was my first experience in navigation.

My early reading was "Robinson Crusoe," "Swiss Family Robinson," and books of that nature. It was natural therefore that I should acquire a love for adventures of the deep. At school I excelled only in geography and history, while for other reasons which it is not needful here to set down I was accounted the worst boy in the village. Being thus "between the devil and the deep sea," as it were, I chose the latter, and made up my mind to visit strange lands. I ran away at the age of eleven.

I was then at Sheffield, Massachusetts, at boarding school, and I got over to Hudson, New York, without being caught, and enlisted on a canal boat bound up stream. At Troy I became one of her chief towpath engineers, driving the horses, with a bill-of-fare of

salt pork and potatoes twenty-one times a week. I resigned at Schenectady and came back down the river. But my father was preaching in New York City and the alarm had gone out. I was captured on my arrival in the metropolis, taken home, cleaned up, and endowed with a new suit of clothes. Then I ran away again.

This time I shipped on a pilot boat in New York Harbour. The harbour was poorly charted then, and we used to "heave the lead," beginning at the Battery, out over the Bar. I had a knack for learning this kind of thing and became an expert leadsman—an accomplishment very useful to me in later years.

I made three cruises on the pilot boat before I was caught again, and remained at home nearly a month before I ran away for a third time. I now engaged in the towing business. I began with the old tugboat *United States,* and was assistant cook and deck hand. Also, I learned to steer. I eluded capture for some time, and after a few months joined the tug *Pluto,* the smallest towboat in the harbour and the best money-maker, for the reason that she stole her fuel—in those days cord-wood—from the schooners loaded with Virginia pine. Eventually I was caught again.

I was caught repeatedly after that. Altogether I spent about three years in running away and being dragged home. I was once taken in Fulton Market, sleeping in a fish-wagon. I had on a suit of sailor's blue dungaree, and my mother was so ashamed of me on the boat going home that she wrapped me up in her shawl and put me to bed, letting it be understood that I was ill.

My parents made up their minds now that it was useless to try to keep me on land. My father sought out a friend, Captain Francis M. French of the ship *Cornelia,* engaged in the emigrant trade between New York and Liverpool, and at last I was shipped officially and went to sea. I was then between thirteen and fourteen years of age.

We were eighteen days making the trip to Liverpool, and most of that time I was unusually ill. It was one Saturday night when we entered Prince's Dock, famous for packet ships in those days, and on Sunday morning I went ashore to get my breakfast—no cooking or fires then being allowed on a ship in port. The first thing that attracted my attention was the ringing of the chimes of the old St. Nicholas church, and I sat down on the steps and cried like a child. It was the first time I was ever homesick, and I have never been in Liverpool since that I did not seek out those steps and sit down and recall my first ocean voyage.

Queen Victoria, accompanied by the Prince Consort and her eldest two children, paid her first visit to Liverpool just at this time. I was very anxious to see her, but the streets were roped off where she was to pass and it was impossible to push through the crowd. So a shipmate of mine, a boy, Tommy, and I got up a sham fight and a ring was quickly formed for us, British style. We fought our way toward the rope, the crowd making room. When we reached the hempen barrier our war was at an end. We saw the Queen.

The *Cornelia* was a fine ship of about eight hundred tons, small enough for these days of twenty-thousand-

ton steamers, but one of the largest up to that time that had entered the port of Liverpool, and we brought back with us nearly one thousand Irish emigrants. A volume might be written upon a single passage of the emigrant ship of those days. The food and accommodations need not be described. In bad weather everybody was seasick. Boxes, barrels, beds, men, women, and children were tumbled in a promiscuous heap, and often we were obliged to go below, perhaps in the middle of the night, to straighten them out. It was simply hell afloat.

Typhus fever broke out during the passage home. A large number died and were buried at sea, sewed up in pieces of old canvas, weighted with a few pounds of coal. Sharks followed the vessel constantly, and I have seen them grab a body before it was three feet under water.

We arrived in New York Harbour Saturday night and I was permitted to go ashore from Quarantine next day. My father was then preaching in Brooklyn, and I walked into the church just as he was beginning his sermon. This time I had returned honourably, and clean. I had on a neat blue shirt, white duck trousers, a black silk neckerchief, and a jaunty sennit hat, made of braided grass, such as sailors wore in those days. As I walked down the aisle his eye, and the eyes of his listeners, most of whom I knew, fell upon me. It has been said that my father that day preached the shortest sermon on record. I had been gone about three months and was a genuine sailor at last.

III

The First Naval Experience

I NOW remained at home for a time, and went to a private school in Court Street, Brooklyn, to study navigation. But my teacher knew less of the subject than I had acquired with my small practical experience, and my hours of study being short I became a disturbing element in the school. After a few weeks my father succeeded in getting me into the ship *Rainbow,* an East Indiaman, bound for Canton, China. But one day before sailing, at the Captain's house—his name was Hays—I went swimming in a large tank in the attic, which proved to be the water supply for family use, and such was the Captain's wrath that I concluded not to go with him to the Orient. My father was deeply grieved at the time that I had lost such an excellent opportunity, but it may be added that some years later when I came home he said to me:

"My boy, I think you know more than I do about ships. Do you know that the *Rainbow* has never been heard from?"

The *Rainbow* had been lost on her homeward passage. She had sailed in company with another tea and silk ship, and a race home had been arranged. Captain Hays had said to his rival and those standing around: "I'll beat you home, or I'll go to hell." The

last seen of the *Rainbow* was off the Cape of Good Hope. It is supposed she was caught aback in a squall and went down stern foremost. Perhaps she became a consort of the *Flying Dutchman* and is still trying to round the Cape. Off Good Hope we always looked for the *Flying Dutchman* in those days.

I now resolved to join the Navy, and went down to No. 9 Cherry Street, the "Naval Rendezvous," where a Board of Officers was in session. The storekeeper down stairs coached me to present myself as an able seaman, the idea being the higher rating I got, the more plunder for him. I was examined physically, and passed, though the surgeon was a little dubious about my age and stature—the former being somewhat magnified and the latter always small. Then the line officers questioned me about "handing," reefing and steering, and I boxed the compass to their entire satisfaction.

I was now placed on the receiving ship *North Carolina,* but it was an uninteresting place, and I used to run away about every Saturday afternoon. I would say to an officer leaving the ship, "Can I carry your grip, sir?" and when we got to the gate the guard would think I was the officer's servant and let me pass. It was a good scheme, but it wore out at last and I had to devise another. One day I walked up near the gate with a two-foot rule and a memorandum book, and began measuring—"Two foot—four foot," etc. When the guard asked what I was doing I said, "Don't bother me, you will break my count." He thought it must be all right then, and I measured myself out. I usually went home Saturday night and was

regularly in the "brig" or ship's prison every Monday morning.

I was soon transferred from the *North Carolina* to the store-ship *Supply,* and again to the schooner *Onkahaye,* a double-bottomed vessel, the only craft of her kind ever in the United States Navy. I found promotion very slow. I had become a gunner's mate, but this advance carried with it only a can of brickdust, a bottle of oil and a polishing rag, and my chief duty was that of brightening the brass screw caps of the carronades on the spar deck. I concluded to resign, and did so. Subsequently my father obtained a discharge for me in the regular way. I think they gave it to him very willingly.

I now departed from my ordinary custom and sought assistance of a whaling agent in South Street. A few days later I was in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and there was selected by the captain of the whale ship *Junior* as a foremast hand—not a greenhorn—because I had been at sea. My physique was against me, but the captain decided my strength by placing his two hands—as broad as the hands of Providence—on my shoulders and trying to "buckle" or bend my spine backward. I stood the test and was accepted. I now began one of the most remarkable voyages ever made by any vessel, with one of the ablest whalemen and best men that ever sailed the sea.

IV

The Beginning of a Great Voyage

THE whale ship *Junior,* Captain Silas Tinkham, cleared from the port of New Bedford on the 13th day of December, 1847, with a crew of twenty-two men before the mast, all greenhorns except "Old Bill," an English man-o'-war's man, a Kanaka, and myself. Then there were the captain, three mates, four boat steerers, cooper, carpenter, and a negro cook—the last named being the only man I ever met in all my seafaring who was born in Rye, New York, my own native town.

The *Junior* was a little ship—about three hundred and seventy-eight tons register, and a trifle over a hundred feet long. Such a craft to-day could be stored as long boat on the deck of an ocean liner, yet she had a capacity when full of oil of about four thousand barrels, carried four boats and four years' rations for thirty-three men. Our course was shaped across the Atlantic down to the Cape of Good Hope, where we captured a "hundred-barrel" sperm whale—a rare prize—which gave most of us our first experience in whale fishing. We now entered the Indian Ocean, where we met our first cyclone—the memory of which haunts me still.

The weather had been generally good, but it was a time for wind, and we were "lying-to" under a close-

reefed main topsail, main spencer, and foretopmast staysail, and the wheel was lashed "a-lee." At noon all hands went to dinner, leaving the decks entirely deserted. I came on deck to get a pot of drinking water, and as I went aft I saw a strange movement in the surrounding waters. The sea near the ship was quiet, but on the horizon it was foaming, dancing, and bobbing in a most disturbing manner. The sky had a weird, strange colouring, and the lightning made it a network of zigzag streaks. I watched it for a few seconds and then ran to the companionway and called,

"Come on deck, Captain Tinkham, I think something dreadful is about to happen!"

In an instant he was there, followed by the three mates. All hands came piling after and were ordered to shorten sail. But before a movement could be made the storm had struck us, ropes had parted, sails had been blown into ribbons, and the little ship was on her beam ends with the water almost up to her hatch coamings. We were in the vortex of a cyclone. Then followed a most appalling time. The sea suddenly became as flat as a floor, and the spoon-drift almost blinding, while the rigging screeched like an Æolian harp of the inferno that it was. Men clung or were pinned fast where they stood. One of the thirty-foot boats was blown from her davits and in some unaccountable manner was impaled on the crossjack yardarm. Sails were stripped from the yards as if they had been made of cheese cloth and the rigging aloft was covered with threads of cotton, which gave it an uncanny look. The wind whirled 'round and 'round

the compass and the screeching aloft varied with each angle. The day wore on with no abatement of this awful war of the elements, and darkness fell as an added terror, with blinding electric flashes and ear-splitting thunder. No one of us expected to outlive that night.

Finally toward morning there came a sudden lull and a terrific downpour of rain. To escape this we crept below, when suddenly it changed to hail, which kept up a deafening roar for several minutes; then followed silence—an appalling stillness that turned the heart sick.

Someone at last ventured on deck and called, "Come quick, boys!" and all hands crowded up to find the decks covered with between three and four inches of hailstones the size of marbles, while in the distance a huge cloud belching lightning and thunder showed the direction our demon had taken. Then the sun came up, and a fair wind blew through the cotton-covered rigging; but we were too exhausted to undertake repairs and were ordered below for rest, all except an officer and two men, who were relieved every two hours. Within a few days we had a full new set of sails bent and our ship righted; but another vessel, the *Emerald,* that had been our companion, was never heard of again.

Perhaps this violent storm frightened the whales out of the Indian Ocean, for we met with no further success and after some months' cruising we made our way to Angier Point, on the island of Java, to recruit ship.

It was at Angier Point that I met with another new

experience—that of being buried alive, though in this case by intention and for a good purpose.

Soon after our arrival I was seized with a very severe attack of the Java fever and it was not believed that I could pull through. Captain Tinkham had loaded me full of calomel; but it was no use, and I had my shipmates carry me on deck to look at the sun for the last time. A Malay merchant was on board, and, looking at me, said:

"Bury him on shore and draw out fever." Then he told them how to do it, and I was taken ashore, and under a huge banyan tree buried up to my neck in the warm earth in a comfortable sitting position, with an awning over my head, and two shipmates, a Malay and a Dutch soldier, to look after my comfort and protection. The latter was necessary, for there was a water conduit nearby where tigers often came down to drink, and it was not a comfortable thought that one of them could walk up and bite my head off in case my guards got frightened or were overpowered by the savage beasts. Neither did I relish the idea of bugs and worms that might be creeping through the soil, but my Malay friend assured me that such was the poison of the fever absorbed by the soil that no insect would remain near me.

Well, I stayed nearly two days in that hole, and the first night a tigress and two cubs did come for water, and there was anxiety and excitement enough in our camp before the snarling creatures were put to flight to throw me into a profuse perspiration, which no doubt was beneficial—at all events the natives said so, and sure enough the fever was all gone.

I was removed from my grave in a very weak condition, taken on board, and in a few days was nearly well. I have heard of a similar treatment recently adopted in our own country for various diseases, and I think it may be safely recommended. The earth is a great disinfectant and healer.

At the end of about two weeks we left Angier Point and shaped our course for the New Zealand whaling grounds, but still with no success, and at last put into the little port of Mongonui for various supplies and a little shore liberty for the men. Nothing of note happened here except that a cooper of the whaler *Clifford Wayne* while in swimming was suddenly assailed by a shark and bitten in two before we could rescue him. From Mongonui we cruised to the westward again, often lowering for whales, but with no luck. We had been out nearly a year now with only one capture. "Old Bill" said there must be a Jonah on board, and until he was found and made to quit the ship we should never catch a whale. We believed "Old Bill," but the question was, who was our "Jonah." It so happened that it became my fortune to find him.

V

The Tale of a Would-be Pirate

ONE day the four boats were away chasing a school of whales on our weather beam, and five of us, including a boy named Tom Pierce and I, were left on board to work the vessel to windward after the boats. Tom had some hatchets to be sharpened and he asked me to turn the grindstone for him. The stone was forward of the try works, where the others could not hear. As I sat on the fore-hatch turning the crank, Tom first made me swear secrecy, and then unfolded a plan to me that made my hair stand on end. This was nothing less than to seize the ship, at just such a time as this, compelling the others to join us—killing them if they refused, I continued turning the crank while Tom unfolded his plan in most minute detail, showing that it must have been a study of months. My effort was not to let him see that I was alarmed or shocked at his idea. It would be easy, he said, to tell the people in any port that the entire ship's crew, being off in the boats, had been attacked by a school of whales and the boats destroyed before the ship could reach them—the crews drowned or torn to pieces by sharks. When I suggested that we might be becalmed and the boats overhaul us, he declared it would be an easy matter with the firearms we carried to kill every

man on the boats as they approached, or if a breeze came up we could run the boats down and drown the men, a pirate crew could be organized in an Australian port, and then we would roam the seas in search of prey.

The more he talked the more I thought I should be obliged to use a hatchet upon this would-be buccaneer, but before our discussion ended the boats returned and Tom left me, saying, "Now, Jack" (I was called Jack at sea), "don't forget your oath."

Imagine my state of mind with a load upon it like the secret of this young villain, the son of a good mother, who had sent him to sea with a Bible as a parting gift. I could not sleep, especially when he was on watch, and, though eager to tell the Captain, I was oath bound, which in those days was a solemn thing. Even if I told, I knew that Tom would be put in double-irons, or lashed to the rigging and whipped, and this I did not wish to see. Finally I was completely unstrung and preferred being aloft, looking for whales, or at the wheel—anywhere away from Tom. I felt now that I knew who was our "Jonah," but how to get rid of him was the heaviest heart-burden of my life.

One day the Captain resolved to return to Mongonui to recruit ship. This was good news, for I thought here might be a chance to get rid of Tom. On the night before we reached port I said to him:

"Tom, when your watch goes on liberty to-morrow you must leave the ship never to return. With your bundle of stuff for trading with the natives, pack up your duds and get away from the ship as far and

as fast as you can. It is best for you that you do this and it is best for me, for I cannot bear this suspense any longer. Go, for your mother's sake, for your own sake, and for mine. If you don't I shall break my oath."

He looked at me a moment and then said, "All right, Jack, I'll go." I stood an extra watch that night on the plea that I could not sleep in the warm forecastle. I did not know what Tom might attempt if I went to bed. At daybreak the liberty men were in the boats, and Tom was there with his bundle. When the boats went ashore again to bring off the men, Tom was not among them. I never saw him again.

After two or three days searchers were sent out to find him, but without success. Then, a day or two before we sailed, I said to the Captain that it was better not to find him, and when he demanded my reasons I told him that if he would promise not to try to get Tom back I would tell him an amazing story, but not until we were ten days' sail from the coast of New Zealand, when there would be no chance of our returning to Mongonui. I told him that so long as we were in reach of Tom I was under an oath, which I considered sacred.

It was a long time before Captain Tinkham promised me. He coaxed and even threatened, but I would not give in. Finally he agreed to give up the search for Tom on my conditions. It was a great load off my mind, but I had many doubts as to how the Captain would receive the story. I felt sure he would blame me severely for not coming to him at once with the tale.

It was an anxious ten days that passed, especially as the Captain more than once besieged me to reveal my secret without further delay. I know now that he saw it weighing on my mind, and feared I would be sick before the final day. It came at last, and Captain Tinkham took me into his cabin and I told him the story from beginning to end. He never spoke a word until I had finished; then after a long pause he said:

"My God! Tom must be crazy! What a narrow escape for us all!"

Then he chided me for not telling him sooner, as I knew he would; but Captain Tinkham was always kind and in some things he commended me, too. He questioned and cross-questioned me for a long time, then he told me to go forward and say nothing to any one. The men were curious to know why I had been in the cabin so long, but I did not tell them. I said they would know in due time.

On the following Sunday morning the word was passed forward by the second mate that all hands were to go aft at two bells (one o'clock), and during the morning there was much speculation as to what was going to happen. I knew. I knew the men were going to be told about Tom Pierce.

That Sunday, the dinner with its tempting plum duff was fairly bolted, and every man was ready to march to the quarter-deck before the next striking of the bell. When it struck twice we were quickly assembled, and the Captain with his back against the mizzenmast said to me, "Jack, come here!" and I stepped out of the line and took my place by his side. "Boys," he went on, "I have called you aft to hear

the story of why Tom Pierce ran away." Then, turning to me, "Jack, tell your story, word for word as you told it to me, to your shipmates assembled here."

He placed me directly in front of him, and I began and told all that had happened that day when they were away after whales and I was turning the grindstone for Tom. It was a sight I shall never forget—those thirty-two men and officers listening to a simple statement of a plan to murder them all and seize the ship—and how I had carried the secret among them for so many days. At the end I pleaded justification for this on the ground that Tom had a good mother and would perhaps now reform, and also that with Tom's desertion we might get rid of the "Jonah" which had brought us our bad luck and might have cost us our lives. I stopped then, and the Captain made a little speech on his own account. He said he blamed me for not telling him sooner, but on the whole I had done the ship a service, and he ended by saying, "Now, boys, give Jack three cheers," which I suppose they did, though I did not hear them, for the strain had been too much and I had to be carried from the deck. I was sick then, sure enough, for several days, but when I got out again I was well in a minute and happier than I had been for months.

VI

Into the Antarctic

STILL we captured no whales, and men like me, whose pay was to be one barrel of oil out of every one hundred and eighty taken, began to feel that the chances of a fortune in whaling were poor. We went into Hobart Town, Tasmania, at last, with no other excitement than having fallen in with a frigate loaded with two hundred women passengers who were being transported from England to become wives of convicts at a Tasmanian penal colony. But at Hobart Town there was entertainment enough for six of us, for we were persuaded by a rascal, under promise of good pay in the cattle drogers (vessels) to leave the *Junior*—his sole purpose being to deliver us to the police as deserters, and when our time of servitude had expired to obtain the legal fee of ten dollars per head for returning us to our vessel. Our servitude in this instance lasted for thirty days, and the sorrow of the treadmill and rock pile was made heavier by the thought that we had deserted so good a ship and captain. Fortunately, he remained in the harbour, fitting for an extended cruise for the south, and we went back gladly enough when our time limit had expired. Then, good man that he was, he gave us a dollar apiece to go ashore and have a little real liberty. It all turned out well enough in the end, too,

for by a mere accident I fell in with a kindly old gentleman who proved to be the governor of the island, and to him I told the story of being sold into captivity, with the result that the land shark was captured, compelled to return the sixty dollars to Captain Tinkham, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment at hard labour.

After all, we were loath to leave Hobart Town. It was the first white man's port we had visited since leaving New Bedford more than a year before, and it was a beautiful place, with its December midsummer and its fine harbour.

But Captain Tinkham had heard of a new species of whale with which the Antarctic Ocean was said to be fairly alive, and when all was ready we one day hoisted anchor, dropped down the river Derwent, and pointed our prow south-poleward, toward a region rarely visited, and imperfectly known from the description of such explorers as Cook (1773), Weddell (1823), Wilkes (1840), and Ross (1842). We had no reliable charts of those waters, knew nothing of the character of the navigation, and not a man on board, fore or aft, had been within the polar circle. But in those days nothing daunted the whaling skipper, who steered into unknown waters, without charts and with imperfect means of navigation. By frequent use of the lead we hoped to avoid danger from grounding, but we had no idea what other perils we were to encounter.

The first two weeks of the cruise were uneventful. The wind was fair and we ran southward rapidly. Then presently we entered a melancholy region where

the temperature dropped rapidly and there were masses of floating ice and dismal fogs. Many days we did not see the sun at all, and as we were subject to strange drifts and unknown currents it was often impossible to tell where we were going. As for whales, it is true there were plenty, but they were of a worthless sort—no right whales, only a few finbacks, and schools of sulphur-bottoms, which whalemen know well enough to let alone.

Our Captain became uneasy and did at last put two irons into one of the last named, an enormous fellow that was lying near the ship. But he cost us six hundred fathoms of line, which ran out like lightning from the tubs, the smoke rising from the loggerhead.

We now entered a region of fearful cold, and gales that followed each other in rapid succession. In the meantime we were drifting, no one could tell whither, meeting with no whales suitable to our purpose. For weeks we were tossed about this dreary waste, striving at last to retrace our course only to be carried among a multitude of icebergs, enormous in size and of threatening aspect. It was a weird world that we had penetrated, a part of the globe unpeopled by any human beings except ourselves—thirty-three isolated souls in quest of a whale that had no existence, in waters that had no history. It seemed more than probable that our little ship and its hardy crew would find an eternal abiding place beneath these Antarctic waters. We youngsters did not realise all the danger, but still we were an anxious crew.

The weeks passed and there came no favouring wind. We began discussing the probabilities of spend-

ing an Antarctic winter. There were rations enough, such as they were, but there was no way to place the vessel in a comparative degree of safety. The outlook was gloomy indeed, when suddenly to the joy of all there came a shift of wind, and with every yard of canvas spread, including studding sails, and with the ship's head pointed northward, we began our return voyage.

With a lookout for open water at the masthead, from dawn to dusk the ship was pressed on her course, and never in her history was sail carried on her as it was on that memorable trip. We had a fortnight of favourable weather and had left the ice behind when we ran into a terrible storm—almost as severe as our first cyclone—but finally made our way to Lord Howe's Island, off the Australian coast, where we wooded, watered, and laid in a stock of potatoes and some fine young pigs. We were glad to be back from that gloomy sea below the circle, but within three days we were again under way, hunting for sperm whales, and within a week we heard from another whaler that the "bowhead," a new species of whale, had been discovered in the Arctic Ocean, some of them storing down four hundred barrels of oil. So away we went for the other end of the world.

VII

Into the Arctic

TWO things occurred on our northward voyage which seem worth recording. We touched at the Island of Rotumah, one of the Fiji group, and the liberty crew went ashore one morning, each with several yards of calico, some tobacco, and a handful of odd trinkets for trading. Judge of our surprise to find that the natives would not barter with us—a thing unknown before. When they invited us toward a nearby hill we went with some hesitation, for those were dangerous islands and cannibalism was an institution in the South Sea. We went, however, and soon discovered a large thatched hut, capable of holding four or five hundred people, and into this many persons were making their way. We entered with them and were escorted to the front and given seats on a mat. Then a man arose and said something which we did not understand. The audience also rose and began to sing. The words were unintelligible, but the tune we at once recognised as that of a familiar hymn. Then followed what was evidently a prayer, another hymn, and an address or sermon. By this time we remembered that it was the Sabbath, and saw we were in a house of worship. After the service we were taken to the chief's house and entertained, and next morning when the port watch went ashore

they had no trouble getting rid of every piece of calico and pound of tobacco they had.

We wondered how this island had become Christianised, for there were no missionaries. Many years after in London, at a meeting of missionaries, I learned the story. It seems that a long time before our visit, a little boy who had been badly treated on a British ship ran away on this island, taking his Bible—always the mother's parting gift in those days—with him. He fled to the mountains, and after the ship had left, came down into the village, and was kindly treated by the chief and admitted to his family. He learned the language, became a preacher of the Gospel and converted the island to Christianity before a white missionary ever landed on that soil.

At another island of the Fiji group the natives were so threatening that we did not dare to land; but at Tahiti occurred the second incident I have mentioned. This was no less than my first acquaintance with a queen.

I was ashore that day, and passing along a principal street I saw a native woman and man engaged in a hand to hand battle. There were spectators, but they made no attempt to interfere. Naturally I rushed in, and pushing the woman aside attended to the gentleman, sailor fashion. Some of the outsiders then started to interrupt the amusement, but the woman with a word stopped them. When the affair was over I was astonished to learn that the woman was Queen Pomare and the man her consort. I was invited to the royal palace, and for once, at least, enjoyed the confidence of a real queen.

We headed straight northward after this, arrived too early to enter the passage through the Fox Islands and went up into the Okhotsk Sea, where we fastened to several whales, losing all. During one of our lowerings a large bull whale knocked our boat to pieces, and with a coloured boy, Tom Cole, each clinging to an oar, I spent four hours in the icy water. But a good rubbing down, a glass of old Medford rum and a nap put us in good shape. We presently abandoned that foggy, stormy sea and shaped our course for the Arctic Ocean. We passed through the Fox Islands and on through Behring's Strait, turned around, and came back to St. Lawrence Island, where we anchored. In a very few days we had nineteen hundred barrels of oil in the hold, a single whale stowing down three hundred and forty barrels of bowhead oil, and thirty-four hundred pounds of the finest whalebone in the market. We killed our first whale on the 5th of June, 1849, and on the 15th of July the last one—taking, in all, eleven whales. The effects of our Jonah had disappeared at last.

Our cargo was now soon completed and Captain Tinkham headed the *Junior* for home, after an absence of nearly eighteen months, covering more territory and *more remarkable* territory in that time than any other vessel that had ever sailed the sea, having been beyond both the polar circles in a single voyage.

VIII

How the Old *St. Mary's* Made History

AFTER a fairly good passage southward we arrived at Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands, where we found several whalemen and two French men-of-war. These two French men-of-war had attracted our notice, but at the time we did not understand why they were there and paid no particular attention to them. A day or two after we arrived, the *St. Mary's,* American sloop-of-war, came in from China—the same old *St. Mary's* which has since become a school ship and lies at the foot of East Twenty-fourth Street, New York City. But the vessel was in active service then, though with most of her crew ill of an epidemic disease. As soon as her anchors were down the sick men were landed under the guns of the little fort on the beach, and I remember very well how we blubber-hunters cussed the captain of the man-of-war for putting his men on the sandy beach where there was no shelter, while only a few rods to the northward were beautiful grass and cocoanut trees. During the afternoon, however, a boat from the *St. Mary's* visited each whale ship and requested the captains to come on board. The conference between the captain of the man-of-war and the whalers lasted perhaps an hour, when each returned to his ship and announced the fact that the two French

men-of-war were there for the purpose of taking possession of the Hawaiian Islands and that the *St. Mary's* men had been landed under the fort to keep the French from firing upon it. We were asked if we would volunteer to go on board of the *St. Mary's* and man her guns. Every man Jack volunteered. We were only too anxious to serve our country.

The men from the different ships were told off in divisions and went on board and were taught how to handle her guns. They got enough men from the *Junior* and several other whalers to complete the full complement of the *St. Mary's* crew in case she went into action. For forty-eight hours, night and day, the whalers were drilling on the man-of-war's decks. "Old Bill," who had been in the British Navy, and myself, who had served a short time in the United States Navy, were selected among the gun captains. The Frenchman was evidently very much surprised that the *St. Mary's,* with more than half of her crew on the sick-list, yet had her decks full of active men, and after looking the situation over for several days concluded that there was wisdom in discretion. They left Honolulu, and never again has France attempted to gain possession of those islands.

This closed my connection with the *Junior.* It was over three years before I reached home, and I had many adventures in that time, as we shall hear later on.

IX

The "Isle of Sacrifice"

THE *Junior* was about ready to leave Honolulu, when I met one day on shore the captain of the bark *Swallow,* a vessel built in Calcutta and owned by a lady of Hong-Kong. Finding I was a navigator, the captain offered me a position as mate, and though I was loath to leave the *Junior,* the fact that she was homeward bound, and the prospect of new adventures, induced me to take this step. In those days the native authorities at Honolulu were very strict about desertions from whale ships, whose trade they were anxious to secure. I was taken on board the *Swallow* at night by a native boat, for which I was to pay one dollar. When we were halfway to the vessel the two Kanakas who were in charge demanded double fare, and I was obliged to persuade them with the boat's tiller to stand by their contract. When the captain of the *Swallow* heard my story he said, "Well, we must put you away, for those fellows will report us, sure."

So, early the next morning I was taken into the lower hold. The head of a large cask was knocked out, I stepped in, the head was put in place, and I was in the dark, with only the bunghole for air. It was after eight on the following morning that searchers came on board to find me. The cabin and forecastle and the

deck houses were ransacked. Finally they came into the lower hold and nosed around there, poking their iron prods into the dark corners. They rolled over a number of casks that were in the hold and finally came to the one I was in. I thought then that my time had come, and braced myself firmly for the ordeal. They seized the cask and tipped it over with a bang, and then rolled it along the ballast. Over and over I went, heels up and head up, until I did not know which was which. I braced every nerve and did not move. For some reason they did not test the bunghole with their iron prod, and presently I drew a great breath of relief, for my cask was still and I heard them ascend to the main deck. But it was not until we were under way that I felt safe, and it was nearly noon before I was released from my close quarters.

The *Swallow* was bound for Sydney, New South Wales, and there was nothing of especial interest in our passage. I recall her now chiefly because of the manner of my enlistment and the fact of her motley crew, which comprised many nationalities, including one hundred and thirty Lascars. Also because the owner, Mrs. Inness—a woman well known throughout the East Indies in those days as the keeper of a large store in Hong-Kong—was herself on board. Furthermore, I held on the *Swallow* my first official position—that of chief mate.

We reached Sydney at the end of thirty days, and as I had shipped "by the run," I left her there and joined the whale ship *Joseph Maxwell,* Captain Ezra T. Howland, of Fairhaven, Massachusetts. The *Maxwell* was about the size of the *Junior,* and her

skipper a good man. I shipped in her before the mast at the one hundred and fiftieth lay—that is, one barrel of oil to every one hundred and fifty taken—and was assigned to the captain's boat. Our first two weeks' cruise resulted in our not seeing a whale, and we put into Lord Howe's Island—my second visit to that spot—for potatoes. Somewhat later we touched at a small island in the Fiji group for water and wood —the latter for fuel. I do not think this island had a name, but my memory has recorded it as the "Isle of Sacrifice," and my adventure there was of a kind not possible anywhere in the world to-day.

We went to this island in company with the *Clifford Wayne,* a vessel I had seen once before at Mongonui, and the captain of each ship with his boat's crew, carrying the usual bundles of calico, tobacco, and whale's teeth—the latter used by the natives for ornament—went on shore to trade. After landing, our crew went in one direction and the *Wayne's* crew in another, they taking the weather side of the island, while we kept to the leeward. No natives were in sight at the time.

From their position on the weather side of the island, the *Wayne's* crew discovered a squall approaching which foretold a heavy storm, and returned to the boats. In coming over they had stove a hole in theirs on a coral reef, rendering her unseaworthy in rough water, and they now took our new boat and pulled away for their vessel, leaving us to find their worthless one on the shore and a terrible surf outside. It was as dastardly a trick as was ever played by a civilised crew of men.

We had discovered on the island only a few old women, who did not seem inclined to trade with us, and we now cast about for a place to camp for the night, knowing that our shipmates could not reach us through the breakers and sharp reefs. We were not especially afraid, for we were armed, but we were mad clear through and there would have been war if we could have reached the crew of the *Clifford Wayne*. As night came on we hauled up the damaged boat and turned it up for a shelter from the storm. We stood guard by turns and put in rather a nervous night, for there was something mysterious about the place, and a night attack from savages is a nasty thing. Once a wild pig came rooting about, and came near losing his life before we identified him.

When morning came it was still blowing, but we made up our minds to look about a little farther and see what would happen. Several of the old crones kept watch of us and followed us about. They seemed kindly disposed and offered us fruit, but would not barter the wood, yams, pigs, and other supplies which we wanted. There was a small village of these women on the lee side of the island, and while we stood talking to them our captain discovered a number of canoes from an adjoining island coming up under the shelter of our lee shore. This sight gave us a decided chill, as the canoes were full of men and there was no reason to believe they had come over in this gale for a good purpose. However, we stood our ground.

The newcomers had a conference with the old women on arrival. Some of them seemed to be chiefs,

and now and then they looked and pointed at us, which did not make us feel any more comfortable. Presently, from somewhere in the grove behind, a group of young native girls appeared. They were from twelve to fifteen years of age, plump and handsome for their race. Their dress was nothing more than a piece of tapa about their loins, and their hair was filled with lime to indicate that they were virgins. We now noticed among the trees the fires of a number of Samoa ovens, while near us was a sort of audience plat, and we realised that some ceremony was about to occur—something in which we were likely to play the principal part.

Still, we decided to await developments. It might be death to run. Certainly it would be fatal to attack them, for we were greatly outnumbered. Perhaps, after all, they meant us no harm. But I may say we were a solemn-looking party when we were led to the centre of a semicircle and seated on mats.

A man does a lot of thinking in a very few seconds on such an occasion. My chief concern was as to how many of those fellows I could get away with, with the means at hand—a sheath-knife and an old smooth-bore gun. My shipmates were similarly armed. There may have been a hatchet or two in the party. We talked little, but we were prepared to shed blood before going into the pot.

The whole assemblage was now seated, and several old women brought up the girls, who faced the group calmly—it seemed to us with little interest. There followed some talk from two or three of the chiefs, at the end of which three of the girls stepped out from

the others, facing us, and each made a brief address —what about, I do not know. But we began to realise now what was going to happen. We were taking part in a sacrificial ceremony and these were to be the victims.

There was no delay. Scarcely had the last speaker finished, when as if by magic, almost, three men arose behind the girls and, quick as a flash, with a war club delivered each one of them a blow in the back of the head. As they fell they were quickly borne away into the bushes. We did not see what was enacted there, but the group about us sat perfectly still for what was probably only a few minutes, but seemed a very long time. Then there was a stir; several addresses were made and we were served with cooked fish, yams, breadfruit, bananas, and the like. Everybody seemed in a good humour and our spirits rose; but there lingered a question as to what the final dish of this feasting might prove. We were soon to learn. We had put in about two hours in dining and ceremonies since the slaughter of the girls, when several men appeared with large baskets. These were set before the chiefs, and from them something was served on banana leaves—strips or squares of cooked food, about two inches long. As guests, we were served first, and there was no doubt as to the character of the cooked flesh—the final observance of the human sacrifice.

A great deal of humour has been made by the comic papers out of cannibalism, but you may be assured that at the time when we sat as guests at the feast there was no humour in our little party. It was less horrible perhaps than it would seem now, only because we

were familiar with tales of cannibalism, and did not set much value on the lives of these islanders. We were relieved, too, at not having been chosen as the victims, though there still lingered a possibility that with appetites awakened for appeasing the gods, they might decide to serve us for supper.

Nothing of the kind took place. We were accorded the best of treatment, and they finally gave us to understand that we should be returning to our ship. We went over to the damaged boat, patched it up as best we could, and as the gale had abated set out for our vessel, which we reached safely, though through a tremendous surf. It was many years before I was able to solve the mystery of why we should have been immune among that cannibal race. Then I met an old Wesleyan missionary who told me that we had landed on an island set apart for human sacrifice—that it was peopled exclusively by girls and their attendants; also that we were perfectly safe, for to have harmed us there would have brought down, as they believed, the vengeance of the gods to whom their sacrifices were made.

X

More Savages, a Few Minstrels, and Many Pirates

WE touched at another South Sea island on that voyage, Tongataboo, where I fell in love with a dusky little daughter of a king, who wanted me to remain on the island. Here was one of my great lost possibilities, for I might have succeeded to the throne and become father to a race of monarchs. But I was young then and the world seemed waiting to be conquered. To rule over a point of land in the South Pacific was no great matter, so I sailed away from wifedom, kingdom and the cares of state.

It was during the cruise of the *Maxwell* that I made my first entry into theatrical life. It was in the early days of George Christy, and we organised a troupe of minstrels after the Christy pattern, with such success that we not only entertained ourselves but the crews of other vessels, and upon our return to Sydney were engaged to perform at the theatre; the town was placarded, and for a week we drew crowded houses, receiving twenty pounds per night for the company of fifteen—more money than any one of us had ever seen before to call his own. It was the first minstrel show ever given in Australia, and the manager was anxious to have our entire band desert. But

our captain had taken precautions to have the proceeds of the week turned over to him and the boys couldn't part with their money. So they stayed with the *Maxwell,* all but myself, who had only shipped for the cruise, and was paid my share when I left the vessel. This was late in 1849.

I now spent several weeks in Sydney, seeing much and visiting many places of interest in the neighbourhood. Eventually I joined the ship *Oneco,* of Duxbury, Massachusetts, Captain Drew commanding. The *Oneco* had come from Boston, loaded down with gold hunters for the California mines, and her deck houses had been fitted up for passengers. The crew now occupied these luxuriously fitted quarters, ate from real plates and slept in rooms instead of in the forecastle of common sailor life. The vessel was bound for Manila. I was the only sailor on her not born on Cape Cod.

We ran over to the Ladrone Islands to wood and water ship, as well as to paint the vessel inside and out —the latter to save dues in the harbour of Manila. The Ladrones were savage islands and the harbour difficult to enter, but a native pilot took us in safely. No shore leave was allowed, a wise provision of our skipper, as we found later.

A number of canoes were always hanging about the vessel, and on the morning we were to sail a large collection of them appeared, the men all armed. We made up our minds that we were to have trouble and hastily shotted our guns, loaded our pistols and sharpened our cutlasses, determined to meet any warlike visitors halfway. Then we began to heave the anchor,

but by the time it was fairly clear of the ground the fellows opened fire on us with arrows and stones, which we returned with bullets, killing a great number—I believe as many as two hundred. They came on for a time, yelling, and firing with bows and slings, but our return fire was more than they could stand, and they dropped back out of range, though still following. I believe they depended on the native pilot, again on board, to wreck the vessel; but the third mate and a sailor with a pistol took him up on the topgallant-forecastle and told him that if he didn't take the ship safely to sea he would be shot, forthwith. He performed this service, carried us safely outside and was rewarded with a few plugs of tobacco and pieces of calico. Then he was invited to take a swim for shore, which he did with the greatest possible alacrity.

A sailor's life is strenuous at all times, and in those days it was almost a continuous casualty. At Manila I was stabbed for another man, nursed into recovery, only to begin my acquaintance with Chinese pirates on our voyage to Hong-Kong.

We had loaded the *Oneco* with a small cargo of betel nuts, Manila cheroots, opium, and a few thousand dollars in specie, and were about two days from our destination when we ran into a thick fog, where we clewed up our topgallant sail, hauled up the mainsail, lowered the topsails on the cap, and jogged along, waiting for the fog to lift.

We had been in the fog but two or three hours when a large junk suddenly loomed up on our port bow. Our captain, who was an old East India and China trader, took one look at her and said: "My

God! Here's an infernal Chinese pirate junk! Make all sail, quick!"

We did not need that order. Almost as soon as I can tell it we had the sails up and drawing, but not quick enough to escape the junk, which bore down under full head, her decks crowded with men, her grappling irons on a long pole, ready to hook into our chains. The *Oneco,* being built for the China trade, was armed. We carried four guns in each broadside and two swivels on the taffrail, with an ample supply of boarding pikes, muskets, pistols and cutlasses. If the pirate succeeded in boarding us it would mean a hand to hand fight, and what with making sail and getting ready for battle, we had not fired a gun before his grappling irons were in our chains. But at this moment we let go a broadside of our four port guns, which must have disabled the men in charge of the grappling line, for they did not succeed in making it fast around their bits until they had drifted about two hundred feet astern. We attempted to cut this line, but the hook was attached first by a long chain which we could not sever, and the angle was such that we could not hit it with a shot.

We now shifted some of our guns from the starboard side, and our third mate, Mr. Nye, a very strong man, assisted by a couple of sailors, carried one of them to the top of the deck house where there was a better range, while some of our men went up into the mizzentop with muskets and opened fire from there. The pirates in their difficulties did not at first get their guns into action, but kept up a constant fire with their muskets, though with very poor aim. We also man-

œuvred our ship in a way that made it hard for them to get the range. At last, however, they opened with what was apparently a twelve-pound pivot-gun, doing little damage. Their chief effort was to haul up alongside so that they could board us, but we kept up such a hot fire that they failed to succeed in this plan. We could rake their decks with our guns, while our muskets kept up a regular fusillade.

At the end of about three-quarters of an hour an accidental shot from somewhere cut the grappling line and we were free. But our captain's blood was up now, and we headed for her and gave her a broadside that cut away her foremast and made havoc among her men. We would have finished the job then and there, but our ammunition was low, and we were anxious to report to Hong-Kong. On arrival there we immediately notified a little English sloop-of-war, which sailed at once and next day fell in with the disabled junk, took all on board prisoners, sunk her and returned to anchorage. The captain of the sloop-of-war reported that we had killed fully half the pirate crew. The remainder, forty-seven in number, were tried for piracy and promptly hanged. We were congratulated as heroes in Hong-Kong.

XI

I Join the Anglo-Chinese Navy

MY encounter with the Chinese pirates gave me a taste for such adventure, and as the *Oneco* was now loading coolies for Chili, I left her to enlist on a flotilla that made pirate hunting its daily occupation. This Navy was composed of a number of open boats maintained largely by the British Government, seconded by the Chinese authorities. The boats were about forty feet long, carried each a small howitzer and a crew of about thirty-five men—mainly Europeans. The pay was good, and there was prospective prize money, though, as usual, I was attracted chiefly by the desire for adventure. I enlisted for three months and was assigned to boat *Number 23*, commanded by a young man, formerly a petty officer in the British Navy, one of the keenest and bravest Englishmen I ever met. Another of his countrymen was second in command, while twenty Europeans, twelve Chinamen and myself made up the crew. We pulled twelve oars, and when under canvas carried two large lugsails and could spread a square sail. Our shelter for the night was a heavy tarpaulin with side cloths. By day a light canvas awning protected us from the burning sun. Our provisions consisted of salt beef and pork, hard tack and rice, plenty of fish and birds and such vegetables as we could procure. Our cook was a Chinaman with a

crude cooking apparatus, but he gave us two good meals a day. We slept by watches on the bottom boards of the boat and on the thwarts.

The flotilla was made up into divisions, usually six boats in each. These cruised in company and at stated intervals the entire fleet would assemble for orders and drill. We had pistol practice and sword exercises, for the fighting was generally a hand to hand matter, and skill and strength of arm were of first importance. Real fighting was never at long distance. Our howitzer was used only in pursuit, and just before the boarding party sprang on board the pirate junk.

I should mention that a number of small junks were attached to our service to act as scout and picket-boats. These often furnished us the location of a pirate junk unloading or recruiting in some creek, but they never took part in any of the fights. These fights were frequent and bloody. Sometimes they resulted in the extinction of an entire pirate junk's crew, though generally we tried to secure as many prisoners as possible, for the reason that we received a higher premium for live captures that we did for pig-tails of dead pirates. Such trophies—prisoners and pig-tails —were turned over to our flagboats, at convenient periods sent to Hong-Kong, and in due time our prize money came back with our monthly pay.

My boat, *Number 23*, belonged to the "lucky division," and in the six months which I remained with her we engaged eleven junks, which we destroyed, and five with which we had running fights but lost them, owing chiefly to fogs. We usually attacked a junk with six boats, their crews numbering from one

hundred and eighty to two hundred men, so that we generally outnumbered our opponents. Still, not all could board a junk at one time. Five or six men had to be left in each boat as keepers—to pass up arms and ammunition as needed, and to prevent the pirates from destroying our craft with "stink-pots." Aboard the junk our pistols were first brought into play, and with cutlasses we finished the work. Such battles were short, but very fierce, for the Chinaman is a good fighter and has no fear of death. Our own Chinamen were always first over a junk's side, and our loss of them was an average of six Celestials to every European. I could fill a volume with the experiences of that half year, but the story of our most important battle is a fair example of all:

I had been promoted to the command of boat *Number 23*—the young Englishman having been severely wounded and sent to Hong-Kong, while the second in rank had resigned. Three boats of our division one morning came unexpectedly upon a junk moored at the river bank, almost hidden by trees and foliage. The first intimation we received was the firing of three ship's cannons, loaded with bullets, spikes and what not, and for an instant the water about us was white with foam. Not a man in my boat was hit, but the third boat in line had two men killed and four wounded. There was no chance of retreat. All we could do was to dash ahead and get under the range of her guns, and carry her by boarding. Before she could reload we were alongside, had grappled her, and our Chinamen were scaling her like cats.

The odds were terribly against us, as the pirates had

been prepared, while we had been surprised and had lost valuable men. All told there were about sixty of us, besides the caretakers, to do the work. We lost several men boarding the pirate, but we were desperate and went in with our cutlasses at once, keeping our firearms in reserve. I have been in many hand to hand fights, both in that service and in the Argentine Navy, but I never saw worse slaughter than I witnessed that morning on the pirate junk. The pirates were like devils, but we were all good swordsmen, and we cut them down almost as fast as we could get at them. In the midst of it I suddenly found myself cornered by three of the enemy, who were giving me the tussle of my life with their crooked swords. I could do nothing but parry, and I felt that I could not keep this up very long. In fact, I was on the point of exhaustion, when a young English boy ran up behind one of my opponents, and putting a pistol to his head scattered his brains over the deck. The suddenness of it startled the others, and an instant later I had cleft one of the pirates across the jaw and borne down upon the other with the point—thus, with Bob's help, finishing the three of them.

We now had about thirty of them in a corner, and these we opened fire upon with our pistols and settled the fate of the day. When the end came, there were ninety dead and wounded pirates lying about the decks, and some twenty had jumped overboard, several of whom had been shot in the water by our boat-keepers. Our loss had been comparatively small, but greater than usual because of our being heavily outnumbered.

The junk proved a valuable prize. In her was about sixty thousand dollars in specie which she had captured, while her leader was a chief to whom all pirates in those waters paid tribute. In fact, she was the heaviest armed and most dreaded craft of her kind, and we had taken her with the smallest number of boats that had captured a pirate junk since the flotilla was organised.

It having so happened that my boat had led the attack in this fray, I was summoned to Hong-Kong to testify against the pirates, also in the prize court, and to make a detailed statement of the whole affair. This was pleasant diversion enough, though I became tired of telling and retelling the story, and was anxious to get back to the flotilla. When I did return it was as division commander, and I think none of my shipmates begrudged me this new rank. I chose *Number 23* as my flagboat, and I wish I had room to tell of some of our battles and narrow escapes that followed, before our work became dull; when, with a good accumulation of prize money, I resigned my position and returned to Hong-Kong for a period of recreation before seeking adventure in the open sea, which from earliest childhood had always held for me the greatest fascination.

During my many encounters with the pirates, strange as it may seem, I never received a wound that required surgical treatment, and I maintained perfect health though exposed to many diseases. I recall that half year of almost constant fighting, when death was always about me, as one of the pleasantest periods of my life. It was hard, serious work, but it

was a work endorsed by all Christian nations. It was necessary to wipe those "yellow devils" off the face of the waters, and I have always felt that the humble part I took in the work would not be recorded against me in the "log book kept aloft."

XII

I Buy a Chinese Family and Join a Pirate Brig

LOOKING about in Hong-Kong for a congenial household wherein to make my home for a few weeks, I fell in with a most friendly Chinaman—an elderly person whose family consisted of himself, his wife, several children, two sampans, and certain wooden gods of various sizes and degrees of power. I acquired the whole for fifteen dollars and was supposed to own everything, including the gods, for a period of three months, with board in the bargain. The food was good, too, well seasoned and palatable, though I did not always know just what I was eating. I gained flesh and I really saw something of China during those three months. The old man found his chief occupation in being head of the household and smoking opium, while his wife did washing for the vessels in the harbour, and ran the two sampans. She also acted as my foster mother and sometimes took me in a sampan to collect or deliver laundry, and I found myself endorsing the establishment among the ships of my acquaintance. Often my "foster sisters" took me in tow and we visited the neighbours or some theatre, or took delightful rambles into the country, climbing the terraced hillsides to get a view of the splendid harbour. I really en-

joyed being "Jack in clover" for the time, and acquired a great fondness for the Chinese life as I saw it. As a sailor I had let my hair grow long, and I now braided into it a pigtail, put on the national costume, and with tan and a little tint applied by my merry "relations" I passed well enough for a native to have a good deal of sport and to perpetrate a number of jokes, one of which came near landing me in a Chinese prison, if not on the execution block.

I think this discouraged me a little in any inclination I may have had to make a change of race, for I found myself longing to be afloat again, an easy matter in 1851, when everybody was rushing to California and sailors were scarce and well paid. A little brig lying in the harbour attracted my attention. She was a tidy craft of about three hundred tons, full-rigged, with lofty raking spars—in fact, my ideal of a vessel. One day I went aboard and asked the captain if he wanted to ship any men. When I mentioned having been in the Arctics he plied me with questions in regard to bartering furs and walrus tusks, and concerning the ice. He said he was in general trade, including opium, *bêche-de-mer,* sandalwood, sharks' fins, pearl shells, furs—in fact was ready to do anything for gain, a statement which I did not fully grasp at the time. At all events, after a series of questions he shipped me as supercargo, also ice-pilot in event of our going into the Arctic regions. The next afternoon found me, bag and baggage, aboard the brig *Swallow,* my second vessel of that name.

I now took a look over the vessel, and while all trading craft in those days were armed, it seemed to

me that she carried an unusual number of guns for her size. She appeared in fact a regular little fighter —trim as a yacht, neat as a man-o'-war. The crew consisted of about forty men of motley nationality, but by no means of desperate appearance, while the captain, a Baltimore man, was a keen, sharp fellow— a fine sailor when he knew his water, though of rather forbidding aspect. The first mate was a mild, but determined-looking man; the second mate was a bit of a bully, and these, with the steward and myself, made up the after guard, living in the cabin. It was to be a part of my duty to inventory and care for the cargo, which consisted of tobacco, pipes, small looking-glasses, beads, gaudy clothing, calico, rum, and odds and ends such as all vessels in those days carried for native barter.

After settling my belongings, I went ashore and bade good-bye to my foster family, embracing most of them, and salaaming to the gods of high and low degree. Then the brig was ready to weigh anchor and I sailed away.

As soon as we were well off shore a man was sent to each masthead with orders to report everything in sight. This seemed a little curious, as we were not looking for whales. I was also impressed with the fact that we were heading toward Manila, when I had understood that we were bound for the Northward Islands. Still it was not my affair, and questions were useless. During the second day gun crews were selected, and new recruits carefully drilled with those who had already made voyages in the *Swallow*. Then the guns were carefully loaded and shotted and the

small arms kept ready for action. Drilling went on daily and the little brig seemed as much of a war machine as if she had been flying a cruiser's pennant, with all hands in uniform.

On the fourth day I noticed that our Captain seemed restless and frequently hailed the masthead lookouts to keep a sharp watch, and several times went aloft himself. That night we shortened sail and made very little headway. I had no watch to stand and turned in at ten, to be awakened about four by hearing the watch making all sail. I went on deck to find every stitch of canvas set, the masthead lookouts doubled, the Captain pacing to and fro on the starboard side of the deck. I felt that something was going to happen before the day ended—what, I could not tell.

With dawn, the Captain himself went up on the main topsail-yard, which made five pairs of eyes scanning the horizon. He had been there hardly an hour when one of the men on the foreroyal-yard sang out "Sail, ho!" and instantly the Captain answered, "Where away?"

"Two points on the starboard bow," was the reply, and immediately the brig's course was shifted two points, all hands were called, studding sails were set in a jiffy and with a good breeze and a smooth sea the little brig went reeling off ten knots to leeward.

I had a very clear idea now of the character of our vessel. She was a trader, right enough, but, like many another vessel in those days, she could be a pirate as well, when the prize was large enough and the chance of punishment small. I hardly know what were my feelings when I realised that I, who but a

short time before had become distinguished as an exterminator of pirates, had now myself become one of a pirate crew. My chief reflection was that there was nothing I could do except look on and take no part in the action. I therefore stood still and watched the approaching vessel. She was presently made out to be a junk, evidently bound from Manila to Hong-Kong, and when our Captain was satisfied that she was the one he wanted, all hands were ordered to quarters and I knew we should smell gunpowder before long.

The Captain came down from aloft to direct our course and to see that the guns were properly cleared and manned. We were not to have things all our own way, it seemed, for the junk did not seek to escape, but prepared for combat. We came down on her with a rush and as we passed under her stern gave her a broadside, which was responded to by two guns, evidently of larger calibre than ours, but poorly managed. We now luffed under her lee and gave her a charge of grape, and when we came up and crossed her bow we gave her another heavy broadside. Great care was taken not to injure her hull near the water line—the fire of our gunners being directed especially at the upper works in order to cripple, without sinking, the vessel.

The poor Chinamen were able to fire their guns but three times, but kept up a lively fusillade of small arms for as much as an hour, during which the *Swallow* sailed around the junk, raking her fore and aft. Then two boats with armed crews were sent to board her, and met with slight resistance. I shall al-

ways be glad that I was not compelled to make one of that party.

It was not long after our men had gone aboard that they began lowering boxes of specie, packages of opium, and cases of cigars into our boats. Three hours later the junk was set on fire and within an hour her magazine exploded, and not a trace of her was to be seen. Not a single soul had lived to tell the tale.

It was after the goods had been stored below that the Captain came to me and said: "I suppose this is new work to you, but you will see no more of it. I had an old score to settle with that junk. Now it's paid. Say nothing to anybody and forget all about it." I obeyed the Captain so far as not to mention the affair, but to forget it was another matter. The crew, however, seemed to regard it as a mere incident. It was scarcely referred to in the cabin, and the conversation of the men forward was chiefly of the prospects of trade among the Pacific islands. Well, well, the old days were not as these!

XIII

I Winter in the Arctics

AFTER its one piratical venture the *Swallow* cruised about the Pacific, calling on my old friends the Fijians, where we did considerable trading and had one of the encounters with savages so common to those days, when the natives thought nothing of losing a hundred or two men in an effort to capture a vessel. Sometimes they succeeded, too, though I never happened to be on one of those unfortunate ships.

It was not till the latter part of May, 1851, that we at last entered Bering Sea and established our headquarters and began trading with the Esquimaux, some of whom I had met two years before. These were profuse in their greetings, and I informed them that we wanted furs and ivory brought to the ships without delay, as we meant to leave before there was any danger of being frozen in. We showed them our merchandise, and natives were sent hither and thither to spread the news, for no such goods had been offered them before. When the trade slackened we went across to the mainland and continued trading, returning at last to our St. Lawrence anchorage. Few whalers were about that year, and these were avoided. We feared the Russian cruisers might hear of our visit and turn us out, as we were really trespassing

on their preserves. In August I tried to get the Captain to work southward as I feared we might get nipped by the ice and be obliged to remain all winter in that desolate place. But some furs had been promised from inland and he would not listen. When he did, it was too late. We were struck by a succession of heavy easterly gales, and September found our way barred—our vessel doomed to an Arctic winter.

When it became a frozen fact that we were shut in, our Captain, from the brave man and reckless pirate he had shown himself at sea, sank almost to the level of an arrant coward. He was facing a danger he had never met.

No appeal seemed to arouse him from his depression, and at length he summoned me and declared that as I was the only one of them who had had Arctic experience, and had been engaged as ice-pilot, it was for me to do what I could to save the brig. I assured him I would do what was possible, if all hands would aid me, and he promptly called everyone aft and told them to follow my advice and obey my orders. I was twenty-four years old at the time, and I felt that I was shouldering a big responsibility.

The first thing we did was to place the vessel in a position best to resist the action of the ice; the next, to send down the spars so that she would be less top-heavy, and the third, to land most of our provisions, so that in event of the brig being crushed we should have an abundance of food. I persuaded some of the natives to make their home on the vessel, so that we might have the benefit of their advice, also their assistance, if needed. I made no haste with our prepara-

tions, for I wanted to keep the men employed as long as possible, and what with setting the ship to rights, gathering wood from an old wrecked whaler, hunting for polar bears and fishing, I kept the crew busy and cheerful.

After we were snugly housed for the winter, it was necessary to keep the men interested and amused, and I organised a glee club of that pirate crew and we sang all sorts of music, including hymns, which I hope did their souls some good in the last account. Certainly they needed grace.

We also had theatricals, and I remember some of the performers were better in their parts than actors I have seen ashore. The men forward enjoyed themselves remarkably well, I believe, considering that they were ice-bound buccaneers, but the Captain remained a pitiful object and no amount of encouragement would cheer him. He attended all our entertainments, but he was dazed and exercised no authority whatever. Like the vessel, he was "frozen up" and we feared he might lose his reason, especially after the sun disappeared and the fierce Arctic night came down upon us.

Dark, cold months are long and it seems to me that it would take volumes to record the story of that winter. It went by at last, and when daylight returned we began to bestir ourselves for the time of release. The preparations for home-sailing awakened a slight interest in the Captain, who paid some attention to what was going on, though he never issued an order, leaving all in my charge.

It was late in May, 1852, when a gale started the

ice out of the harbour, or rather roadstead, and gave us the first hope that our imprisonment was at an end. Following a large ice field we made our first move toward freedom and the south. I was standing aft, giving orders, as the red-rusted anchor came to the bow, and at sight of it the boys broke into a wild cheer. Something in it all aroused the Captain, who suddenly shouted, "Give her the topgallant sails, boys, and let's get out of this hell as soon as we can!"

From that moment he was in command of his vessel, and I was simply ice-pilot and supercargo as before. All his old bravery and character returned, and I could never understand his condition during our imprisonment in the ice. Coming out, we had a narrow escape from a Russian cruiser, but with our superior speed left her far behind. We now headed straight for the Sandwich Islands, where I left the brig *Swallow,* against the wishes of the captain and crew, I may say, and our long association made me feel not unkindly toward them, pirates though they were. Still I had seen enough of adventure in such a vessel. I received several hundred dollars as my wages and share in the furs and walrus tusks. The prize from the captured junk I did not share.

XIV

By a Long Passage I Reach My Native Land

AT Honolulu I shipped in a little English schooner, the *Twilight,* and made a direct passage back to Hong-Kong, stopping nowhere. I now began to have yearnings for home. I had seen most of the world, had had adventure of almost every sort, and no word from my kindred for four years. I was glad to get to Hong-Kong as a starting point. The *William Henry Harbeck,* Captain Shinn, was in port, and, owing to the scarcity of sailors, offered me fifty dollars a month in gold to ship with him—the highest price I ever was paid for sailing before the mast. We sailed for Liverpool some weeks later and arrived without accident, though I had a narrow escape crossing the Indian Ocean, when a squall struck us and I was knocked from the topsail-yard into the belly of a studding sail, where I out with my knife and cut two slits in the canvas, and putting my arms through clung there, only to be reprimanded by the Captain upon reaching the deck for damaging the sail. We also came near piling up on the end of the Cape of Good Hope on that voyage, for Captain Shinn was an erratic sailor and kept too close in-shore. About two o'clock of the morning we rounded, a man on the foretopsail-yard sang out, "White water

ahead!" and with the helm jammed down hard the ship came up on the port tack, everything slatting in the wind—the white breakers all along our lee beam. Five minutes more would have seen us all in eternity.

At Liverpool I met an old mate named Canfield, who had abandoned the sea to become the American Samson, or strong man, at the old Polytechnic Theatre. I went with him every night to the show, assisted the property man and finally entered the pantomime, taking the part of a fisherman with a stuffed fish, this being my second dramatic experience. Eventually I surrendered the stuffed fish to play the part of a clown and burlesque Samson's performance. From Liverpool we went over to Dublin, where we played a successful two weeks, then returned to Liverpool, where I closed my histrionic career.

The ship *Henry Clay*—the famous packet ship of that time—came into port in command of Captain Francis M. French, with whom I had made my first ocean voyage, in the *Cornelia,* and I resolved to return with him to my native land. She was crowded with emigrants and so far as I could see there had been little improvement in the years since my first experience. We had a great many deaths, as before, during the voyage, but we arrived in New York Harbour in due time. From Quarantine we came directly to the dock—there being no Castle Garden or Ellis Island in those days—and I set foot on American soil once more after an absence of five years and eight months.

I knew nothing as to the situation of my people—didn't even know where they lived. We had landed

at Pier 9, North River, and about ten in the morning I came up Rector Street to Broadway, where I stooped and put my hand on the ground to be sure, after all my years of absence and adventure, that I was really on my native soil. I never pass there now that I do not pay tribute to that spot.

New York was a small city then. The lower part of Broadway was still residential and every house in Bowling Green a mansion. But there had been changes in my absence, and I strolled up Broadway staring at the signs. When I reached the corner of Ann Street, I remembered that Bangs and Mervin, the booksellers, were located there, and would know where my parents lived. So I climbed the stairs and after some difficulty was permitted to see Mr. Lemuel Bangs. When he learned who I was he looked at me and said: "Well, my boy, where did you come from? Your poor parents' hearts are almost broken. They have about given you up as dead."

I told him briefly of my travels and he informed me that my grandfather lived in Yorkville, now East Eighty-sixth Street, and my father in Newburgh. I said, "Mr. Bangs, you will have to let me have some money to get to grandfather's." He replied, "I suppose you are like other sailors. You have earned your money hard and thrown it away easy." That rather nettled me and I answered, "I have not been paid off yet from the *Henry Clay;* but if you are afraid to trust me with a dollar, will you please cash this draft," and I pulled out a bill of exchange for eight hundred dollars and laid it before him.

He gave me a silver dollar then, and told me to

go to "Mat" Gooderson's in Park Row, where the Yorkville stage started. The stage had just arrived when I reached Mat's and I mounted the driver's box. When we got to Yorkville he pointed out the house where my grandfather lived, and when I climbed the steps I saw his name on the door. An Irish servant girl answered my knock and after some delay my aunt appeared, but did not recognise me. I explained that I had just returned from sea and had a message for Mr. Sillick (my grandfather); whereupon she at once asked me if I had met her nephew anywhere during my travels. I replied that I had—that he would be home soon; also that I had seen him in Liverpool, ready to take the first ship. My grandmother, meantime, had been listening over the banisters in the hall, and now came down. The moment she set eyes on me, she recognised me, for my face was the counterpart of my mother's.

I was tired that night and went to bed early. Meantime, without telling me, they had telegraphed my father, who merely told my mother that he had business in the city and came down to Yorkville, arriving about midnight. In the morning I awoke early to find a stranger in my bed, but when I lit a match to see who it was, who should it be but my own father.

We spent that morning in cashing my draft and putting me into some respectable garments for life ashore. In the afternoon we went by rail to Fishkill and crossed over the river to Newburgh, it being then about dusk. My mother seeing me in the dim hall with my father mistook me for a visitor and greeted me as "Brother" Van Name of Albany, to whom I

bore considerable resemblance. Then she hurried away to get the supper, and I did not see her again until we sat down to the table. Even then she did not notice me, until grace was said, when turning suddenly she looked at me steadily for an instant and then jumped up and threw her arms about my neck—and you will have to guess the rest, for I can't tell it.

XV

I Enter the Argentine Navy and Win a Command

BUT the shore had little charm for me. Even my native land and my home could not hold me when, about six weeks after my return, I had an opportunity to make a voyage to Havana, a part of the world I had not seen. I made several of these short trips, during which nothing of special importance occurred, beyond the fact that I was wounded by some Spanish soldiers who mistook me for a drunken sailor and were trying to compel me to board the wrong vessel. I was with the bark *Parodi* at this time, originally built for a slaver—a very swift vessel. We made a passage from New York to Havana in four days and eighteen hours.

But now came one of the important episodes of my life. It was late in 1853, I think, when I became second mate of the ship *Margaret Eliza,* Captain Adams, of New York. She was a frigate-built vessel —with her sister, the *Parana,* pierced for guns, though the portholes were sheathed over—the intention of the owners being to sell these ships to the Argentine Republic, then in the midst of one of her many revolutions.

We arrived at Buenos Ayres laden with a valuable cargo, largely consisting of flour. The revolutionists controlled the harbour and the blockade was on. We

were not allowed to land any merchandise, so we came to anchor and the captain went ashore, leaving the first mate, a curious old Englishman, and myself, in charge of the vessel. The fleets were fighting in our immediate vicinity and now and then the bullets dropped around us, occasionally hitting the *Margaret Eliza,* though without damage. Still, it made me restless, and I was anxious to get into the midst of things.

One Saturday I heard that a challenge had passed between the Government Navy and the Revolutionists, and that a set engagement was going to take place across the La Plata River; whereupon I asked Commodore Coe, an American who commanded the Revolutionary Navy, if he would let me go in the flagship, *El Correo,* a little English-built steamer—the only steamer in the fleet, except an American wooden vessel named the *Eutaw.* The balance of the fleet was composed of brigs and schooners, armed with all sorts of cannons, carronades—anything that would fire a shot—for the most part gathered from merchant ships. It was a nondescript navy and that of the Government was of a similar sort.

The Commodore said that I could go, but that it was a risky business, for the fighting would be hard and at close range. When I told him my Anglo-Chinese experience he made no further objection. We sailed the same afternoon and on Sunday met the enemy.

I was now to witness one of the hardest fought battles I have ever seen. Notwithstanding the fleets were of so poor a sort, there was as much fighting spirit as was ever displayed in a naval combat. It was a hand

to hand conflict on all sides, and in one hour after the flagship went into the fight nine out of eleven of her officers were killed or lying mortally wounded on the deck. When the first officer was stricken down I volunteered to take his place and did the best I could to fill it. When the fight was over we had captured seven prizes, though with a heavy loss of life on both sides. At the close of the engagement Commodore Coe said to me:

"Mr. Osbon, we want you for the Argentine Navy. If you will remain with me, you can take your choice of any one of the prizes captured to-day."

This offer was tempting. I accepted, and picked out a beautiful schooner named the *Veinte-cinco de Mayo* (the Twenty-fifth of May) in honour of some anniversary. I immediately went on board my vessel with the rank of Commander, having been appointed by Commodore Coe on the quarter-deck of the flagship.

I found my vessel a veritable slaughterhouse. Nearly half of her crew were dead. The remainder were entirely willing to enlist under our flag—such being the customary spirit in those countries. I completed my crew from vessels that had suffered less and set about putting my command in order. Her mainboom was shot away and her rigging badly cut up, but her masts had been untouched by our fire, and it did not take me long to put all in shipshape, after which we sailed over to our anchorage off Buenos Ayres.

I felt very proud of my commission and command. The *Veinte-cinco de Mayo* was the fastest sailer in the fleet and I was put at the head of the blockading

line, just off the enemy's fort at the mouth of the little river La Boca. Every day there was excitement, with boats trying to run the blockade, but our first incident of real importance happened when one day a deserter from the shore came off and told me that in the evening there would be a fandango not far from the fort, during which the latter would be as good as deserted for the entertainment.

Relying on the man's statement, about eight o'clock in the evening I took my gig and six men and went ashore to see what could be done. We crept up the beach, and, sure enough, found the fort entirely deserted with the exception of one man doing sentry duty and another who was ill. We captured the sentinel without difficulty, tied and gagged him, and immediately went to work to destroy all the small arms in the place by breaking them across the breeches of the guns. The latter we spiked, and threw them off their carriages over the parapet. We now broke open the magazine door and getting some kegs of powder laid a train to it, after which we removed the sick man and the sentinel to a place of safety, set fire to our train and made for the boat, pulling rapidly away to escape the shock of the exploding magazine.

We never found why that train failed in its mission. Perhaps there was a break somewhere. Possibly the soldier, or even the sick man, in some manner managed to destroy its continuity. If so, it was a brave deed.

We reached the ship all right, but when the soldiers returned from the fandango there was the deuce to pay on shore. I never learned the particulars, but a

few days afterward Commodore Coe sent for me, and when I went on board the flagship he said:

"Mr. Osbon, what do you consider your value?"

"Well, Commodore," I said, "I don't exactly know what you mean, but I hold myself at a pretty good price."

"Well, now," he said, "how much do you *think* you're worth?"

I replied, "I don't know." I couldn't see what he was driving at, and was a little annoyed that he should ask such a question. He picked up a Buenos Ayres paper and showed me an advertisement offering a reward of six thousand dollars for my head. Then I understood, and we figured my value by the pound.

A few days later we went into action again—the enemy having refitted and sent in another challenge. It seems a sort of play war when I think of it now, but the fighting was real enough. The engagement was at close quarters again, and my opponent was a Frenchman who had sworn to blow up his ship rather than surrender. I may say here that the vessels on both sides were officered and manned by men of every nation—sailors of fortune, inspired by the spirit of adventure.

I made a special effort to get grappling irons aboard the Frenchman, and succeeded. Then after a dash we reached his decks. The fellow had two small guns placed aft, commanding the deck, and as we reached it they were fired, killing between fifty and sixty of my men at the one discharge, just missing me by a hair. I now ran aft to have it out with the Frenchman, who had a rapier and was ready for me.

We had it hot for a few minutes and I received a severe wound in the hand, the scar of which I still carry. But I was a good swordsman, too, and presently he rushed toward the taffrail and stooping down picked up a string. The next I knew I was over the bow of the brig in the water. He had fired the magazine.

Knowing his threat I must instinctively have run forward when he stooped, and was thrown overboard by the concussion. No damage was done forward, and the vessel did not sink. The fighting ceased with the explosion, and a sailor threw me a coil of rope and I climbed back on board. The magazine was small, I think, for the deck aft had only been lifted and shattered, and there was a hole in the vessel's side just above the water line. The Frenchman was nowhere to be seen. Standing just above the discharge, he must have been blown overboard and drowned.

I ordered the vessel cast loose and put on the other tack, which brought the hole well above the water line, and in this position we presently repaired the damage by nailing some canvas and boards over it, so there was no danger of our sinking. My hand and face were covered with blood from my wound, but I put some tobacco on the gash, bound it tightly, and in the excitement forgot it altogether.

The engagement once more came to an end with victory on our side. We captured four prizes that day—some our enemy's best vessels. In the two fights the Government Navy had been much reduced in power as well as numerical strength.

XVI

An International Complication and the End of Revolution

WE came back to Buenos Ayres and anchored, and I took up my old position on the blockade. At this time there was a strong pressure being brought to bear by foreign representatives to have the blockade raised for a few hours, as a large number of vessels were waiting at Montevideo to come up with their cargoes. The United States was represented by the sloop-of-war *Jamestown,* since transferred to the Marine Hospital Service. The rights of England were maintained by the auxiliary steam sloop-of-war *Centaur.*

After a good deal of parleying it was agreed that the blockade should be raised on a given day, from sunrise until noon. Ample time was allowed to send word to Montevideo, and a number of vessels came up and availed themselves of the privilege. Among them was an English bark, laden with flour. She had started late and when she was within three or four miles of the blockade line the wind died and she came up, drifting slowly. As the time was nearly up, I sent an officer from my ship to inform the English captain that the blockade would be on at noon, sharp, and to impress upon him that no vessel would be allowed to cross the imaginary line after eight bells

struck. Also, that if he attempted to cross we would take him as a prize.

The Englishman saw his country's flag flying on the *Centaur* and was inclined to turn up his nose at our "mosquito fleet." He came drifting up, and when eight bells struck, true to promise, I sent two armed boats' crews aboard his vessel, declared her a prize, anchored her, and, hauling down the English flat, hoisted that of the Argentine Revolution.

Well, I've seen a good many Englishmen get wild, but that was the wildest Britisher it has ever been my fortune to meet. He immediately went on board the *Centaur,* stated his case—a case apparent to everybody in the harbour—and before long the *Centaur* sent a boat to me, ordering me to withdraw my prize crew from the bark, under penalty of being sunk. I said to the bearer of this message: "You go back and tell your commanding officer that my prize crew will remain on board, and that I'll take mighty good care he doesn't sink me."

As soon as the officer left my ship's side I gave orders to get under way. At this time the *Centaur* was cleaning her boilers and refitting her wheels (for she was a paddle steamer), and, so far as propelling power was concerned, would have to rely on her canvas. Knowing this, I commenced sailing back and forth across her stern, my guns shotted and ready to sweep her decks in case she fired on us with musketry. She couldn't bring her big guns to bear, for I kept between the angles of danger.

The impudence of our saucy little *Veinte-cinco de Mayo* cruising back and forth infuriated the captain

of the *Centaur*. He came aft on the quarter-deck and demanded what we meant by taking up that position, declaring that he would blow us out of the water if we remained there.

"Don't shoot, Captain," I said pleasantly. "We won't harm you as long as you don't shoot at us. If you do, we'll have to sink you."

Then he used some language which I cannot repeat here, and when he was through I went in a little closer and said to him:

"Captain, you were a party to an agreement that the blockade should go on at twelve o'clock, to-day, and that no vessel should cross the line after eight bells struck. I warned the captain of that bark not to attempt to cross after that time, and told him I would put a prize crew aboard of him if he did. What I have done, any country will uphold me in doing."

"And what are you doing over here?" he demanded.

"Well, Captain," I replied, "you sent word you were going to sink us and I came over to see about it. I find your boilers unfit for duty and there is no wind for a heavy vessel like yours. You can't bring your big guns to bear, and if you fire on us with muskets I'll rake your decks fore and aft, unship your rudder and tear your paddle-boxes out of you. You are at our mercy and I'm going to keep you so."

In the meantime, Commodore Coe had seen what was going on and now came over in his gig. He ordered me back to my anchorage and went on board the *Centaur*, but he had not been there long before I was signalled to come aboard also. I obeyed and stated

my case in full, with the result that all hands agreed I was in the right. The captain of the *Centaur* was begging of Commodore Coe to let the bark in, when I suggested that it might be compromised by allowing the bark to contribute from her cargo of flour twenty barrels to the flagship and ten to each other ship in the squadron. This opened a way out and the captain of the bark was sent for. He agreed to the bargain and our boats went alongside for the supply of flour so badly needed, and so costly at that time.

It was a few days later that Commodore Coe sent for me to come on board the flagship. He said, "Commander, I want your resignation. Return to the *Veinte-cinco de Mayo,* get your belongings and resume your duties on your own vessel"—meaning the *Margaret Eliza,* still lying in blockade. "At ten tonight I will be alongside the *Margaret Eliza* and will explain to you."

I returned to the *Veinte-cinco de Mayo,* called the men aft, told them that I had seen enough of the Argentine service and was going back to my ship. I thanked them for their loyalty to me, bade them goodbye, and resumed my duties on the *Margaret Eliza,* where they were somewhat surprised to see me, but seemed glad to welcome me back. The old English mate said, "Well, I never expected to see you again. How in the world anybody can like to fight, I don't know."

About nine all hands turned in except myself, and at ten, according to promise, Commodore Coe came alongside and was presently on board.

"Mr. Osbon," he said, "you may be surprised to

know why I demanded your resignation. I will tell you. It is because to-night, like you, I am no longer of the Argentine Navy. I have here in the boat a quarter of a million dollars in gold. I have temporarily deposited the same amount on board the *Jamestown*. I am going to England—you are going to New York. I desire that you will deliver this money to my wife, on arrival."

Commodore Coe had sold out the Argentine Navy for half a million dollars, one-half of which went with him to London, while the other half I brought to New York and delivered to his wife. I got nothing but glory. The revolution was over. Peace was established and the two navies became as one. Commodore Coe was a professional revolutionist. I was simply a sailor of fortune, fighting for the joy of adventure.

XVII

I Command the *Louisa Kilham*, and Find Adventure on the Coast of Ireland

RETURNING to New York, I joined the bark *Louisa Kilham,* and in her made several voyages to Kingston, Jamaica, thence to London, eventually becoming her captain. On one trip, after discharging cargo we went to Newcastle, England, to load gas coal for New York, and the agent, anxious to secure a larger commission, against my protest loaded the vessel far too deep. We went "north about"—that is, up the North Sea, past the Orkney Islands—to shorten the passage, it being the latter part of November when we sailed.

On entering the Atlantic Ocean we were met by a succession of fierce gales and it was impossible to work the ship to the westward. For days we battled with the storm. Finally the ship sprung a leak, our sail were blown away and we had a most terrible time. The water gained on us very fast, and the men's hands were covered with running sores from their constant work at the pumps. It seemed impossible to save the ship.

Finally the crew refused duty. It was just about noon and I was attempting to get our position from the sun as it appeared from time to time from beneath

the flying clouds. The mate came over to where I was and said,

"Captain Osbon, the men are utterly discouraged and refuse to pump any longer."

I asked him to tell them to wait until I had worked up the ship's position. When that was done, I would ask them to come aft in a body. My intention was to plead with them once more to stick to the pumps. If they failed in this, our hope was gone, and I would request them to kneel in a last prayer.

On sending for them, the crew came into the cabin, and I told them that where there was life there was hope, and begged them to go to the pumps again. They gave me a sorrowful but decided "No." Then I had an inspiration.

"Well, boys," I said, "let's ask God to help us." And taking up a Bible that always lay on the cabin table, I added, "I will open at random, and read the first verse that my eye falls upon."

Sailors in those days had great respect for the Bible. The men stood in perfect silence as I picked up the volume. I opened it entirely by chance, and my eye fell on the tenth verse of the forty-first chapter of Isaiah. I read aloud as follows:

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

I read no more, and stood and looked at the men for a moment, when one old sailor said, "Boys, let's go back to the pumps. That's a message from God to

us, and He never lied. I believe he will fulfil this promise."

They did go back and it was not many hours until the wind shifted and went down, the sea moderated, and on the 23d of December, 1856, we entered the harbour of Queenstown and came to anchor after having been buffeted about on the coast of Ireland for twenty-seven days, pumping the Western Ocean through the ship.

I immediately employed a gang of 'longshoremen to come off and man the pumps and sent my men to the forecastle, where they slept undisturbed until next morning.

Then the underwriter's surveyors came aboard and the ship was ordered to the Royal Victoria Dockyard at Passage West, which lies about midway between Queenstown and Cork. There she received orders to discharge her cargo, go into dry dock and strip. The main and mizzenmasts were sprung and had to be taken out, and we remained at Passage West over four months.

An amusing incident happened while our repairs were being completed. In the time that had passed between our arrival and St. Patrick's Day I had made many good friends and had received very handsome treatment. When the great day arrived, therefore, I was determined to show my respect for the country as well as my appreciation of the extraordinary hospitality, and I ordered made for me a gorgeous Irish flag, and at sunrise had the ship gaily dressed, while from the main royal masthead the banner and the harp of Erin tailed out on the breeze.

The sight gave a vast joy to the townspeople, who arrived in delegations to congratulate me on my flag display and to contribute certain brands of the "old stuff"—a barrel of which was guaranteed not to contain a single headache.

But there is a fly in every ointment. Along about ten o'clock in the morning a twelve-oared cutter from the British guardship pulled alongside the dock, a middy with half a dozen blue-jackets landed, and to my surprise came aboard. There were about a dozen or more townspeople around me when the diminutive representative of the Queen approached me and in a funny, pompous voice asked, "Who is the master of this ship?"

"I am that person," I acknowledged, vastly impressed by his manner. "To what am I indebted for this formal visit?"

Pointing to the green flag above us he said: "You will haul that down instantly, sir, or I will order my men to do it for you!"

I suppose I ought to have been very much frightened at this fierce command. Possibly I was. I know I was a good deal amused.

"Well, what's the matter with the flag?" I asked. "Are you aware that this is an American ship and that you have no right on these decks without my permission? Take it easy, sonny, and tell me what's wrong with the flag."

"Well," he snapped, "that flag has no crown over the harp, and my orders are to have it hauled down. Do you understand?"

"I think I gather the idea," I admitted. "I've

heard better English than yours, but you mean well enough."

I now called one of my men and had the flag lowered. As it reached the deck I said to the middy, "There, little man, the flag's down. Now run along and learn politeness."

As soon as he was gone I had a couple of my men make from yellow cloth two of the smallest crowns ever seen over a harp—the harp being fully three feet long, while the crowns were less than the same number of inches. These were sewed, one on each side of the offending flag, which, within an hour after it had been lowered, again went to the masthead amid the cheers of a throng of shore folk who had gathered to see what I was going to do, and who now crowded on board to join in a Patrick's Pot of celebration.

It was about one o'clock when a man-o'-war's boat was reported coming up the river, heading for the docks. The news spread like wildfire, and the people came rushing from their dinners to see how the Yankee skipper was going to act. This time a young lieutenant headed the boat's crew. As they reached the gangway, I leaned over the side, and was hailed.

"Good-day, sir, are you the master of the ship? If so, I would like a word with you."

I replied in the affirmative and the officer tripped up the gangway. We exchanged cap courtesies, and he said,

"My commanding officer sent a message this morning to inform you that you cannot fly the Irish flag in port, and that it must be hauled down. I have no de-

sire to do anything unpleasant, but I must obey orders."

"But," I replied, "the middy who came said that the objection was that no crown was over the harp, and this fault I have remedied."

The gentlemanly lieutenant gazed aloft and shifted his position, but he was not able to distinguish the emblem that was in dispute. Then he asked permission to call one of his men aboard, but the sailor's eyesight was no better. In fact no one could distinguish the little crowns at such an elevation.

I now ordered one of my men to haul down the banner for a second time and spread it upon the deck—the great Irish harp with the funny little crown above. The lieutenant stared at it a minute; then he said:

"My dear fellow, that crown is all out of proportion to the harp. You could not distinguish it five feet away—much less at the masthead."

"But the crown is there," I insisted. "Of course we have no naval book of instruction on how to build flags, and I may have made the crown on it a little out of proportion; but it's there, according to orders. Hoist the flag again, boys!"

The poor lieutenant looked a bit puzzled, and after thinking a minute said, "Good-day, Captain, I'll return to the ship and make my report."

I offered to share a Patrick's Pot with him, but he said he must hasten back, and left the vessel. As the crowd saw his boat leave our side they set up a wild cheering, and many Patrick Pots went around that afternoon, in sight of the old banner of Erin.

A few days later an invitation came from the com-

manding officer of the guardship to dine with him on board the vessel. I suspected some sort of a trap to catch me, but nevertheless went and met a jolly old captain, who greeted me most cordially, and introduced me to a choice lot of jovial fellows. We had a grand time, and I was asked to tell the story of the crownless and crowned flag, and I think everybody enjoyed the incident. When a few weeks later we left Ireland, the whole "blooming" town bade us God-speed, and waved us a parting. The dock was a cloud of handkerchiefs, while from windows, sheets, tablecloths, petticoats, anything that could be seen, went streaming on the wind.

XVIII

I Abandon Sailing Vessels and Encounter Dangers of a New Sort

I HARDLY need to mention a number of small sailing vessels in which I sailed, or of which I was in command during the middle fifties. Of some of them I do not even remember the names. I recall that I brought one schooner of about four hundred tons from Kingston, Jamaica, to New York, with only one man besides myself, the others having fallen ill of yellow fever two days after we left port.

But steam was now beginning to be the thing. The Collins line, between New York and Liverpool, had been established and Commodore Vanderbilt was ready to begin opposition. I decided to give up sailing for steam and looked about for a berth. Going aboard the *Northern Light,* I explained my errand to Captain Tinklepaugh, whom I knew.

"Why, Captain," said he, "what under the sun do you want to leave a good thing for? You will have to begin at the foot of the ladder in a steamer. I'd like to have you, but the only post open on this vessel is that of quartermaster. I want a quartermaster."

My reply was, "Captain, you've got a quartermaster, right here."

I was willing to accept this inferior position to get a knowledge of steam sailing, and the ways of steam

sailors. My sole duties were to steer the vessel (taking my trick at the wheel with three other quartermasters), to attend to the signals, to clean the brass work in the pilot house, and, when in port, to stand watch at one of the gangways. It was quite a come-down from being master of a ship, but my reasons for accepting the berth were sound, as events proved. This was in 1857.

My first voyage in the *Northern Light* was across the Atlantic, and it was also her first to Southampton, Havre, and Bremen.

On my return to New York I was offered position as fourth mate in the steamship *Moses Taylor*—Captain John McGowan—engaged in the trade between New York and Aspinwall—now Colon—in connection with the Panama Railway. Captain McGowan proved a lifelong friend and was really my father in steam shipping. Under his command I rose steadily to the position of chief officer. One of my voyages in the *Moses Taylor* still presents itself as a vivid memory.

One morning about two o'clock a quartermaster came to where I stood near the pilot house and said, very quietly,

"Mr. Osbon, the ship is on fire."

"Where is it?" I asked.

"In the lamp room, forward."

The lamp room was on the steerage deck, where were quartered between seven hundred and eight hundred returning California miners.

The quartermaster had already informed the chief engineer, who had set the pumps going. I now ordered the vessel put before the wind so the fire would

not blow through her, ran aft and told Captain McGowan, so that he might take charge of the deck. There was no noise made—no alarm of any sort; but when we reached the hold we were unable to unlock the lamp room door. This necessitated the use of an axe, and the noise, with the volume of smoke that poured out, aroused the sleeping passengers. In a moment they were panic-stricken, jumping out of their berths and blocking the gangways.

Before going below, I had hastily put on two revolvers, for those were desperate days, and with a quantity of specie and gold bars aboard and a passenger list like ours there was no telling what might happen in case of a stampede. I now saw that something must be done instantly to avert a panic, which would certainly interfere with our work and might mean destruction to the ship. I drew my revolvers, sprang into the passageway between the berths and levelled them at the men before me.

"Gentlemen," I said, "the first man who attempts to get to those gangway ladders will be shot. There is no danger. We can handle this fire if you will give us a chance; but I will kill the first man that makes a move."

There was some wordy protest at this and a good deal of grumbling. They were a pretty hard lot and all armed. They could have made mince-meat of me, but I would have scored with a few of them, first. I suppose they realised this, for no one attempted to make the break.

Meantime the crew had got the hose into the lamp room, and within two minutes the fire was out. I in-

formed the passengers of this fact and ordered them to remain in their berths until the apparatus was removed and the slop and dirt cleared away. They grumbled again and there were some threats, but they had quieted down by daybreak.

On the morning that we were to arrive in New York the captain called me aft where all the passengers were gathered. Among them was a big rough fellow who had been a sort of leader during the voyage, and one of the most savage of those who had wanted to pass me on the night of the fire. He had a bag in his hand now, and as I came up to them he said:

"See here, Cap, we made a lot o' damn fools of ourselves the other night, an' you done just the right thing. We want to show you that we don't hold no hard feelings. Here!" and he shoved the bag into my hands.

It was a short speech and to the point. The bag contained five hundred and sixty dollars in gold.

I continued in the steam trade about two years, and besides the *Northern Light* and *Moses Taylor,* held positions on the *St. Louis, Illinois,* and on the *Gautemala*—Captain J. M. Dow—a ship that made the first voyage around the Horn from New York to Panama without touching at any port for coal. We went through the Straits of Magellan, and my notes of this passage were used for several years by other steamers that went that route. We reached Panama in fifty-two days from New York—a notable trip.

On the *Guatemala,* also, we had a fire, more alarming though less dramatic than the one already men-

tioned. The ship was loaded with nothing but coal—much of it in the between decks, stowed in gunny bags. The third assistant engineer went down one night with a petticoat-lamp and in some manner set fire to the bagging.

Immediately the gunny cloth was in flames and he came out of the hold half suffocated. It was my watch below at the time, but I was wakened by the tramping on deck and hastily dressing came up to find the smoke pouring out of the forehatch in dense volumes. It was almost impossible to go down there, and the boats were provisioned and swung clear, ready to leave the ship. We were then about four hundred miles off the coast of Brazil.

Yet we did fight that fire, going down in relays, each for a few minutes, and coming to the deck for fresh air. It was two o'clock when we began, and by eleven next morning we had it extinguished. There was no riot or panic—we had no passengers—but it was a thankful lot of men who realised that escape. Speaking of fires, I am reminded of an alarm that was serious enough for a moment, but was not without humour too.

It was on board the *Northern Light,* whose boiler fronts were painted red; a passenger looking down through the boiler hatch saw this flame-like colour amid a cloud of steam, and shouted, "Fire!" Immediately the whole vessel was in an uproar and a dangerous panic was imminent. I am afraid I used some pretty violent marine language in explaining that it was a false alarm. But the climax came when I saw a minister of the gospel on the rail trying to lower

the bow of one of the ship's boats. I ran to him and ordered him to come down on deck. He paid no attention and I seized his coat tail to drag him down by force. Perhaps it was an old coat, for the seams parted and a second later I had the ministerial tail in my hands. He came down then, and he was mad. He was also a spectacle to look upon. He started to call an indignation meeting, but most of the passengers had recovered from their fright by this time and were inclined to be merry at the reverend gentleman's expense. He went raging to the captain, who summoned me to appear. I came, still carrying the coat tail in my hand.

"Mr. Osbon," he said, "what are your orders in case of a false alarm of fire."

"My orders," I said, "are to stop it by any means necessary. I may knock a man down, throttle him, or split him wide open."

The captain turned to the irate minister.

"Those are Mr. Osbon's orders," he said. "You are fortunate that it was only your coat that was split wide open, and not you."

I remained on the *Gautemala* until one day Captain Dow and I were crossing a hatch, when the cover tipped and precipitated us both into the lower hold. The captain was unhurt, but I unshipped my kneecap. In spite of the surgeon's prophecy that I would lose my leg, I remained in my berth but a few days and finished the voyage, and subsequently two more, on crutches. Finally I was ordered north on leave of absence with pay. I soon dispensed with the crutches, but for a long time carried a cane. Then an offer

was made me to take a small schooner to Brazil—a *guarda costa,* or revenue cutter. I accepted, and returning as far as St. Thomas was requested by the American Consul to take charge of the ship *Thomas Wales,* whose master had died of yellow fever. I brought her safely to New York after a passage of fourteen days. This was in 1858 and closed my career in the merchant marine.

I now entered upon a period of different, though no less active, service. The Civil War was brewing. The air was full of secession, and the time was coming when there would be opportunities for all men who had smelled powder and had a knowledge of the sea. I was to have a part in that time, as we shall see, though not before some rather interesting and, I may say, preparatory, experience in other fields.

XIX

I Make a Venture into the Lecture Field and Embark in Newspaper Work

THE course of a man's life is usually altered by trifles—or at least what seem to be such—and it was through the merest accident that I now found myself following a walk of life which in my wildest dreams I had never even contemplated—that of a public lecturer. It came about in this wise:

A lecture course was in progress at Yorkville—now East 86th Street, as before mentioned. The Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was to be the speaker on a certain night, which proved so stormy that, in those days of poor transportation, the prospect of a journey from Brooklyn was enough to discourage the stoutest heart. At all events, Mr. Beecher did not appear, and somebody in the audience (and in spite of the storm a pretty good one had gathered) proposed that Captain Osbon spin a yarn. To please the audience, and to earn the promised stipend, I ascended the platform for the first time in my life.

I must have succeeded, for the next day the young men of the village (as it was then) suggested that I give a lecture in Wakeman Hall. The boys promised to lend a helping hand—the post office sold tickets, and when I entered the hall it was packed. The only

face I missed was that of my own father. I had given him and my mother tickets, but they did not wish to come, and see me fail.

Still my father could not resist. I had scarcely commenced when I saw his cloak, and his face above it. He slipped into the hall and sat down behind the stove.

Now, I had prepared my lecture with care, and in manuscript form. Imagine my feeling when I got on the platform and felt in my pockets for it and found it missing. It was a trying moment, but I don't think anybody noticed my difficulty. I went ahead, just as I had done a few evenings before, only on a heavier scale. I do not think I shall be boasting if I say that the audience was spellbound—first with curiosity, then with the story of my travels. I was full of all that I had seen, and I told it in a way that perhaps made some of them think they had seen it, too.

But I kept my eye on my father. In fact I talked at my father. At last the old gentleman got up, left his seat behind the stove and came up farther front. The nearer he got, the more I warmed to my subject, and when I finished I think everybody was satisfied. *I* certainly was, for the doorkeeper turned over the proceeds, which were between sixty and seventy dollars, and with this tied up in a handkerchief I went home to receive amazed congratulations from my parents, especially my father, who had never received so much for one of his excellent sermons.

"My boy," he said, "where did you learn to talk like that?" Then he counted the money over and

over. I believe he thought he was dreaming and would soon wake up.

I put in three months lecturing after that. I was my own booking and billing agent, and in some instances my own treasurer up to the moment of going to the platform. I painted my own posters in water colours, and put them up at night so as to preserve my dignity as the chief attraction. I appeared in churches and lyceums, and told of missionaries, cannibals, Arctic exploration and piracy, according to my audience. I had a varied experience that winter; but I cleared eight hundred dollars in the three months, and had a good deal of enjoyment besides.

While on my lecture tour I was frequently asked by country editors to sit down in the office and write something about my entertainment. I was glad to do this, and little by little acquired a taste for seeing my work in public print. When the New York Conference met in New York in May I attended its regular sessions as I had been accustomed to do in boyhood, and there met an old schoolmate who was reporting the Conference for the *Commercial Advertiser.* then edited by Francis Hall. My friend, being suddenly taken ill and knowing that I was familiar with Conference proceedings, asked me to finish his copy for that session, instructing me how to turn it in to the paper. Mr. Hall complimented me on my afternoon's work and directed me to continue through the Conference, at the end of which he paid me a liberal sum —for those days.

I now surrendered all other ambitions for newspaper work. I liked it and I found it easy. For a time

I wrote for most of the New York papers, combining marine and theological subjects in a manner which the editors must have found satisfactory.

It was about this time that the New York *World* was in the process of being founded. Nathan D. Bangs, son of Lemuel Bangs, was treasurer of the company, and as the paper was to be a Methodist organ, published with clean sheets and clean reading, I decided that this was my opportunity. I therefore applied for the position of marine reporter, and was engaged, becoming, I believe, the first reporter employed by the New York *World*.

My work, however, was not confined to marine reporting. Money was a scarce article at the *World* office in those days and each man had to do a number of things. I remember as my first important assignment, the arrival in New York, on June 16th, 1860, of the first official Japanese delegation sent to the United States to observe our progress and to study our methods. This delegation had its headquarters at the Metropolitan Hotel. A splendid reception was given them, and a great parade marched in their honour. That marked the beginning of Japanese progress, though no one then believed the nation would ever make any real use of American ideas. Our chief idea was to treat them so well that they would let us trade freely in their ports and would buy our goods. Little we thought that within fifty years they would equal us in progress and excel the world in warfare, though, even then, those of us who were near them any length of time could not help observing how studious and observant they were. Every moment,

when not otherwise employed, they were studying English books and dictionaries, poring over drawings and plans, and with a patience and a harmony among themselves truly marvellous to us. That is the whole secret of Japanese success.

I remember that the chief feature to the general public of the Japanese delegation was a little juggler called "Tommy," the smallest man in the party, and the youngest. He had a charming way with him and used to keep paper toys in the air with a fan. The New York ladies were all in love with "Little Tommy," and the Mikado's relatives dropped into comparative insignificance. I have heard that he became too popular, and the question, soon after he returned to Japan, "Where is Little Tommy now?" still remains unanswered.

It was a great thing in those days for a newspaper man to get a "beat," and my first big achievement of this kind was a report and description of the Stevens Bomb-proof Floating Battery, then building in Hoboken. The *Herald* had spent a good deal of energy and money trying to get inside the excavation made in the Hoboken hillside—a sort of dry dock in which Commodore Stevens had built this piece of floating armament. Mr. Croly, city editor of the *World,* told me if I could get the eagerly sought description it would be worth twenty dollars to me. That was a large sum in those days, but I cared more for the glory.

One morning I went over there to reconnoitre. I found that the stories of watchmen, guns, etc., had been exaggerated, and presently discovered a hole in

the fence, through which I crawled, taking such risk of being shot as seemed necessary to the work in hand. Fairly inside the excavation, I found no ladder by which I could get into the vessel, but there were open rivet holes, and sharpening some sticks I put these through as I climbed and presently was inside, pacing off the dimensions, and estimating the depth. I came out unobserved, went to the machine shop and saw parts of her engine. With my knowledge of steamships, I constructed the battery in my mind with fair accuracy, then went to the office and asked permission to go aboard, but was peremptorily refused and ordered off the premises. Next morning Commodore Stevens read a description of his vessel, which created a profound sensation among naval men as well as newspaper editors, and everybody wanted to know who had been smart enough to get to the windward of the Commodore. Frederick Hudson, then managing editor of the *Herald,* and one of the keenest observers and ablest newspapermen I have ever known, was particularly anxious to know who did the Stevens Battery article, and upon learning the facts sent for me, and subsequently employed me, though that is a later matter and the beginning of a longer story.

XX

I Meet the Prince of Wales, and Enjoy His Friendship

IT was in October, 1860, while I was still on the *World,* that the Prince of Wales, under the guidance of the Duke of Newcastle, made his visit to this country. He arrived on the 11th at the Battery, and his reception was an extraordinary affair.

The *Harriet Lane,* a revenue cutter commanded by Captain John Faunce, had been turned over to the Prince and his suite by President Buchanan in person, for his special use while in our waters. She was a craft of great beauty, well adapted to royal service and functions, and became really the floating headquarters of the Prince. He had used her in his journey from Washington to Richmond, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, and on the morning of October 11th she met the royal visitors at South Amboy and conveyed them to the Battery, where they were welcomed by about the most enthusiastic crowd that this or any other nation ever saw.

The royal party had engaged a suite of fifteen rooms at the Fifth Avenue Hotel—the corner suite on the second floor, fronting Fifth Avenue and Twenty-third Street—and the reception parade up Broadway was the most imposing affair New York had known up

to that time. Every flag and piece of bunting on Manhattan Island is said to have been unfurled that day. Every balcony was a mass of ladies, with big hoop-skirts which made them look like inverted balloons jammed together. Every piece of coping and cornice was fringed with heads of men and boys, who clung there for hours waiting for the procession to pass. The street below was a mass of people, and when the cortége did come it was almost impossible for it to make its way along. One of the papers said that a tide of quicksilver could not have slipped through that crowd.

The parade was late leaving the Battery, and it was after dark before it reached the Fifth Avenue Hotel, but nobody begrudged the time. The spectators were glad that the procession had to move slowly so they could get a good long look at the Prince. He rode in a barouche, bought especially for the occasion by liveryman Van Raust at the "vast expenditure of one thousand dollars" and drawn by six black horses. He was a boy of only nineteen then, fair and slender, and the women went simply mad when they looked down on his pretty young face. When he reached the Fifth Avenue Hotel it was almost impossible to steer him through the tossing billows of crinoline. Women pulled and jammed and crowded to get a closer view, and struggled to get near enough to touch his royal person. One large lady who had worked her way to the front seized him by the arm as he passed.

"Be you the Prince?" she demanded. "Be you the Prince?"

"I am, Madam," he answered and dashed frantically up a convenient stair.

The big woman turned and faced the crowd, wild with happiness.

"I seen him an' I touched him," she cried joyously.

If she is not still alive, she probably died happy because of that experience. A little boy who was held up for view called out,

"Why, Pa, he's only a man!" and that expressed a good deal of the general idea that the Prince of Wales was something more than just a handsome, good-natured, generous boy—one of the best young fellows in the world.

Before he came to New York, when they asked him what he would like, he said,

"I would like a torchlight procession, a ball, and an unobserved seat in Mr. Beecher's church on Sunday evening."

He got the procession on arrival. The ball came off at the Academy of Music, which still stands on the corner of Fourteenth Street and Irving Place. The New York idea of royal splendour in those days was to have plenty of crimson velvet. The Fourteenth Street entrance and passageway was walled with this goods, and wherever on the floor of the Academy the royal foot was like to step, crimson velvet carpet had been laid. On the stage there was a white tent with a crimson velvet carpet, and with a crimson velvet dais in the centre where the Prince could sit and view the crowd. Forty crimson-covered pedestals were scattered about the place and on these were iron vases of flowers. The crimson idea was carried out a good

deal in the dresses too, and probably there were never so many diamonds together in New York before. Well, we did the best we could with such money and taste as we had in those days, and the ball, with the supper that followed, cost what was then considered the enormous sum of forty thousand dollars. I remember that on the Prince's table at supper there was a statuette of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert at one end, and a representation of a railroad train and locomotive crossing a suspension bridge on the New York Central at the other. I don't know just what was meant by this combination, but it seemed to mean something at the time and everybody thought it was all right. I believe some of the papers did find fault with the committee on arrangements—mostly aldermen, I think—and tried to make out that the parade and ball had been failures. But this verdict was unpopular, even with the Prince, who, as stated, was the best of good fellows and pleased at everything. At all events, the Japanese reception and entertainment had been outdone, and it was a busy time for everybody in New York, especially for the newspaper men.

As I have said, I was marine reporter on the *World* then, though other assignments often came my way.

One of our best descriptive writers had been delegated to travel about with the Prince, but perhaps he described too much, for frequently his copy didn't get to the office in time, and the other papers were "beating" us daily. One morning the managing editor sent for me and said,

"Osbon, we want you to take the Prince of Wales in hand and stay by him while he is in this country.

You are prompt and we shall rely upon you. Use the telegraph and don't let us be beaten again."

I did not need a second order, and if we were beaten again I never heard of it. I don't think I was ever very much at describing costumes and floral decorations, but I knew what was going on and how to get my copy to the office in time. Eventually I met the Prince in person and became his friend. This is how it happened:

We were on board the *Harriet Lane,* which was always at hand during his stay, and a number of visitors were present, including guests, reporters, and Mr. Archibald, our British Consul, whom I knew very well indeed. In those days I wore a very long beard—one that would seem to have attracted even the eye of royalty—for the Prince singled me out and inquired of Mr. Archibald who was the gentleman with the enormous growth of whiskers. Mr. Archibald told him and asked if he would like to have the *World* reporter presented. His reply was favourable, and I was formally presented to England's present king. Beardless boy as he was, I think I suspected that he wanted to get the secret of my hair tonic. At all events we became good friends from the start. Every day he used to single me out and give me some of his royal cigars, and we smoked and talked together. I was with him daily up to the time of his departure, he always having a pleasant word and usually a good many questions concerning the people about us.

I went with the Prince to West Point on the *Harriet Lane,* October 15, and remained with him until his return to his native land. When we parted he

shook hands as with an old friend and cordially invited me to come and see him whenever I was on the other side of the water. I had seen him once before as a child with his mother, on my first visit to Liverpool in the *Cornelia,* when, it will be remembered, I fought my way to the ropes, and I was to see him more than once, later. He always seemed to me just what a prince should be—a beautiful child, a generous, noble boy, a perfect English gentleman.

It was not until 1869 that I saw him again. I was then in Paris, and the Prince of Wales was there attending the races. He was a man of the world by this time, but the same unpretentious good fellow I had known as a boy. I was passing down the street with Rear Admiral Gregory's son and two or three other young Americans, when we came to the Jockey Club. I said,

"The Prince of Wales is in there—I'm going in to see his royal highness."

Somebody said, "Dollars to doughnuts you don't."

I took out my card and went up to the attendant at the door and said,

"I should like to see the Prince of Wales."

He looked me over and referred my card to some higher flunkey, and in time it reached an official who came out and asked what business I had with the Prince. I replied that I was with him during his visit to the United States, and that when we parted he invited me to call if I came across the water. I think the guard was a little dubious about my story; but he took my card and presently returned and ushered me into the royal presence. My long whiskers had been

replaced by a Napoleonic goatee and moustache, but he remembered me in a moment, got up from his chair, met me with a cordial handshake, asked me to be seated, and pushed the carafe my way. Then he said:

"Well, how's Captain John Faunce?" Faunce, as will be remembered, commanded the *Harriet Lane* and was always a great favourite of his.

We chatted fully half an hour, and when I left he renewed his invitation to visit him in London.

I may say here that I availed myself of the Prince's invitation more than once in after years, always finding him the same. I will recall only one of these occasions, however, and this simply to show his kindness of heart and friendly spirit for one who could be of no possible service to him.

It was one day, several years later, when I had been to Woolwich Arsenal and refused admittance, that I remembered having a friend at court. I went to Marlborough House and sent in my card. I had been there before, so had no difficulty this time and was soon in the presence of the Prince. I told him briefly what I wanted, and turning to his desk and taking a card he wrote:

This will introduce you to Captain Osbon of New York. He desires to visit the arsenal. Please extend full courtesies to him. WALES.

"When would you like to go down, Captain?" he asked as he handed me my credentials.

I replied that I thought of going next morning.

"Very well," he said, "we'll try to make things pleasant for you."

I thanked him and retired then, and next morning took the train for Woolwich. Arriving at the gates, I was stopped by the sentinel as before, and my business was demanded. I said,

"I wish to see the Commandant. I have a card of admission from the Prince of Wales."

The way that guard's manner changed was something wonderful to see. He shouted for the corporal of the guard, and the corporal of the guard summoned the officer of the day. I wasn't kept waiting a minute.

The officer of the day greeted me cordially, and seemed to know that a Captain Osbon was expected. He presently turned me over to another officer, who took me to the Commandant's office, where I was received like a genuine personage.

I was then given every facility for observing the arsenal, and accompanied by an officer spent a most pleasant and profitable day in the place, lunching with the Commandant at noon. All day I was treated with such courtesy as might have been shown to some distinguished American, instead of an ordinary citizen of the Republic. When evening came, they would not permit me to return to the city for dinner.

So I sat down with the Commandant and his staff to dinner—a sort of family affair—and by and by told them some stories of the Civil War during which, as Farragut's signal officer, I had taken part in some interesting events. We shall hear of these later. I have gone far ahead of my narrative to complete this epi-

sode—and I only hope the chapters ahead will prove as interesting as my little crowd of listeners seemed to find them that night in the Woolwich Arsenal.

At train time we were all taken to the station and I found there a special for the whole party, including several ladies. Throughout, I was paid the deference and attention due to a guest of the Prince, and, altogether, it was the greatest day I ever spent in England, for which I have always been deeply grateful to my old friend, who is now His Majesty, Edward VII., King of England.

XXI

The Beginning of Civil War

THE year 1860 was an eventful one for New York City. The entertainment of the Japanese Legation and of the Prince of Wales kept things lively up till the middle of October, and then came the last days of the great presidential campaign which ended with the election of Abraham Lincoln. That was a fierce and bitter campaign, and when Lincoln was declared elected the bitterness and the trouble were only just begun. In the South, State after State adopted secession measures, and the retiring administration of James Buchanan, if it did not openly encourage the secession idea, at least did not much oppose the seizing of public property—forts and armament throughout the Southern States. Officers and soldiers were permitted to resign, munitions of war were left within reach of the insurgents. Everything was done, it would seem, to get matters well along before Lincoln took his seat, to make his position hard and embarrassing.

But not all the commanders at Southern military points submitted or became party to the secession movement. Some of them strengthened their positions in preparation for the conflict which they saw coming. Colonel Gardiner, who was in command of the defences at Charleston Harbour, attempted to increase his supply of ammunition, and as early as October, 1860,

was removed by the Secretary of War, John Buchanan Floyd, who for more than a year had been quietly arming the South in preparation for the coming struggle.*

Major Robert Anderson was appointed to succeed Gardiner, but being a man of staunch loyalty he immediately reported the condition of affairs, and urged that Fort Sumter and Castle Pinckney be strongly garrisoned, if the Government meant to command the harbour. General Scott, then Commander in Chief of the United States Army, also urged the matter, but Secretary Floyd had excellent reasons for giving no attention to these pleas. On his own responsibility, therefore, Major Anderson began to strengthen the defences of the harbour, and when the South Carolina Ordinance of Secession had passed, and he knew that commissioners had been appointed to proceed to Washington and demand the surrender of the Charleston forts, he realised that with his little body of loyal men he must at once take up the strongest position for defence. This was Fort Sumter, which he entered, without instructions, on the evening of December 26th, 1860. Secretary Floyd immediately ordered Anderson to explain his conduct, and the gallant Major's reply was that it was to save the government works. He likewise asked for reinforcements and supplies, and the retiring administration was placed in the em-

* "During the past year 135,430 muskets have been quietly transferred from the Northern arsenal at Springfield alone to those of the Southern States. We are much obliged to Secretary Floyd for the foresight he has thus displayed in disarming the North and equipping the South for this emergency."—*Mobile Advertiser.*

barrassing position either of complying with a proper and loyal request or of openly abetting the secession movement. Days were allowed to pass without action, during which the insurgents were busy obstructing the harbour, enfilading all its approaches and removing the lights and buoys essential to the safe entrance of relieving vessels. It was only after these preparations were fairly complete that a vessel, the *Star of the West,* was chartered by the Government to carry supplies and reinforcements to Sumter.

It is probable that President Buchanan was sincere enough in this attempt at succour for Major Anderson, but the President was surrounded by disloyal men, and Jacob Thompson, Secretary of the Interior, by his own confession afterward acknowledged that he sent word to the Charleston authorities "that the *Star of the West* was coming with reinforcements." She sailed on January 5th, with great and ostentatious secrecy, commanded by my old friend John McGowan, under whom, it will be remembered, I had risen to the position of chief mate on the steamship *Moses Taylor.*

As reporter for the *World* I was to have gone with the *Star of the West,* holding nominally the position of second officer, but in the eager and very manifest anxiety to get her off secretly she sailed *in broad daylight,* several hours ahead of time, and before I could get my luggage to the wharf at the foot of Warren Street. I do not wish it understood that Captain McGowan was ever for a single instant insincere in his purpose. He was simply master of the ship, acting under orders from Washington. The vessel that

night, down the bay, took on two hundred and fifty artillerists and marines, with arms and ammunition, and proceeded on her way, reaching Charleston Bar before daylight, January 9th.

But she never reached Fort Sumter. Two miles from that point the first cannon shot of the South against the North came ricochetting across her bows from a masked battery on Morris Island, three-quarters of a mile away. The national flag was flying at her gaff, and Captain McGowan immediately flung out a large American ensign at her fore. This only increased the firing. Morris Island thundered away, and now and then a shot came from Fort Moultrie. Two steam tugs and an armed schooner put out to intercept her. Being an ordinary paddle-wheel ocean steamer, without armament, she was in no position to defend herself, and Captain McGowan, finding himself hemmed in and in imminent danger, put about, after seventeen shots had been fired at him, and returned to New York, where he arrived January 12th. It became known later that a very small quantity of powder was in the Charleston forts at this time, and had Major Anderson been properly advised he would have opened with his powerful guns under cover of which the *Star of the West* might have come safely to port. It was never intended that she should do so. The expedition ended precisely as had been planned by those who cajoled the President and abetted secession at Washington. The great Civil War had begun, though it was not until the fall of Sumter, three months later, that the Federal Government was willing to acknowledge it.

XXII

My First Meeting with Abraham Lincoln

WITH the return of the *Star of the West,* excitement in the North ran high. The outlook was dark and people's hearts were full of foreboding. In the South preparations for war went on at a lively pace. Soldiers were drilling, tugs were being converted into gunboats, and everybody expected to fight within a few days. Heavy guns and mortars were conveyed to Charleston, and quantities of powder. The *Times* correspondent at that place reported that 487,000 pounds had arrived within a few weeks after the *Star of the West* incident. The "Southern Congress," which was convened at Montgomery, was said to be "tinkering with the tariff," and passing an unnecessary law that "bread-stuffs and munitions of war were to be admitted free."

One going over the old files of dailies to-day can but faintly imagine the excitement and intensity of feeling with which these reports were first read, now more than forty-five years ago. Still the Administration at the North did nothing, and would do nothing until the inauguration of Lincoln, an event which certain fire-eating and fire-breathing politicians had declared would never take place.

It was on February 19th, 1861, that Lincoln

reached New York on his inaugural journey from his home in Springfield to Washington. He came by the way of Albany, Troy, and Poughkeepsie, making short speeches at each stop, and was hailed by thousands of shouting people as the Moses who was to lead them from the wilderness of obscure paths and impending perils. At each place he assured them quietly and gently that he would do what he believed to be right and for the best, and the impression that he made was deep and lasting.

At Thirtieth Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, New York City, the new Hudson River Railway Station was thrown open for the first time that day. The engine of the presidential train was decked as gaily as a bride, and at three o'clock, P. M., it slowly drew its precious freight through the cheering multitude to the platform. From here the grand procession to the Astor House equalled even that of the Prince of Wales, every street being a mass of banners and bunting and cheering throngs. Whatever of disloyalty there was in New York, and there was plenty of it, did not manifest itself on that day.

I saw Mr. Lincoln in person at the Astor House that night. I was not detailed to interview him for the *World,* but went over of my own accord.

I was ushered into his presence and introduced myself, stating that I was an old traveller. I shall never forget his appearance or his position. He leaned his right elbow on the mantelpiece, and his face wore a sad, care-worn look, as if he would be glad to be let alone. He straightened himself up and asked me where I had travelled. I replied, " All over the world

—came near getting to both poles in one voyage," adding that I had spent most of my life on the ocean, and had now drifted into journalism for the reason that I liked an "all night in" once in a while.

Tired as he evidently was, he seemed interested in my chat, which perhaps was a change from the political and personal questions which had been put to him throughout his travels. I was still telling him my adventures when the newspaper men appeared. Then he talked to them.

I saw Mr. Lincoln many times after that, the first being just after the battle of Bull Run. He remembered me instantly, and asked some particulars about an incident I had previously narrated. From that time I counted him as one of my friends, and such he proved. He was always ready with an amusing tale, some anecdote to illustrate his point. Later in the war I often supplied him with news before it came in the official way, but that is looking too far ahead. It was my first talk with him at the Astor House that I remember most vividly. There before me stood the man upon whom the fate of a nation rested. There in his face was written all the sad forecast and resolution of the coming struggle. In a little speech made next day, I think, he said:

"When the time comes, I shall take the ground that I think is right—right for the North, for the South, for the East, for the West, for the whole country." That was what I saw written in his face—the resolve that, come what would, misunderstanding, bitterness, and tragedy, he would take the ground he considered right, and he would maintain it to the end.

XXIII

I Engage in a Second Attempt to Relieve Sumter

THE successful inauguration of Lincoln only made more bitter the feeling of the South. The inaugural address was denounced as a declaration of war by men who had never seen a single word of it in print. The war element did not want to read the message. They wanted only war.

On the day of his inauguration a message came to the President from Major Anderson in which he stated that a force of 20,000 men would now be needed to relieve the fortress within the time when such relief would avail the survivors, whose stores and ammunition were limited. Lincoln gave the matter immediate consideration, being at first inclined to abandon the fort, thereby removing what South Carolina seemed to regard as her chief excuse for rebellion. This policy did, in fact, greatly disturb men like Senators Wigfall and Pryor, who were for war at all hazards, and advocated a baptism of fire and blood.

But the policy of withdrawal would not do. The question was deeper than that, and no temporary relief, however soothingly applied, would result in any permanent good. In his inaugural, the President had pledged himself to use the force at his command to

hold, occupy and possess the forts and other property belonging to the United States, and the only question in his mind became the proper method of fulfilling this pledge.

Major Anderson now regarded it as nearly impossible for any vessel to reach the gates of Fort Sumter. The gunners of the opposing forts had the range, as was demonstrated by an "accidental shot" striking the threshold of the Sumter gate during blank cartridge practice from Morris Island. Any ship could certainly be destroyed, either before reaching the fort, or while disembarking. Nevertheless, Lincoln was determined to do what he could. In January, Gustavus V. Fox, formerly lieutenant in the navy, had presented to President Buchanan a plan for the relief of Sumter. Fox was now summoned to detail his plan to the new President, which, in brief, was to have supplies put up in portable packages, loaded on a vessel, to be convoyed by several men-of-war and three fast tugboats, which under cover of darkness were to run the supplies through to the forts. Launches were also to be used for this purpose.

The plan with its possibilities of success appealed to the President, and Mr. Fox was sent to Charleston to visit Sumter. He was accorded special permission to visit the fort by Governor Pickens, and on his return reported that Major Anderson had supplies to last until April 15th, and that any relief to be of value must arrive by that date. The President then verbally authorised him to prepare his expedition, which he did with energy and skill, having all ready for departure by the 9th of April.

The Collins liner, the *Baltic,* was selected as the troop and store ship of the expedition, which further consisted of the United States ships *Powhatan, Pawnee, Pocahontas,* and the little revenue cutter *Harriet Lane* (Captain John Faunce) whom we have met before in these chapters, rendering special service to the Prince of Wales. Besides these, there were the three swift tugs already mentioned. I may say here that the expedition, being a secret affair, did not sail as a fleet, but each craft separately—at different hours and, I believe, from various points. It was not to assemble until it reached Charleston Bar. My recollection is that the *Pawnee* and the *Pocahontas* came out of the Chesapeake. The *Powhatan,* selected as the flagship, left from some New York anchorage and dropping down the bay, took on Lieutenant (afterwards Admiral) Porter and proceeded directly to Fort Pickens, another point threatened by the Confederates. The *Baltic* also left from New York, as did the *Harriet Lane,* though from different docks. Concerning the tugs I do not know, for I never saw them, and knew nothing of them at the time.

It was to my old friend, Captain Faunce, that I applied for permission to go in the *Harriet Lane.* Being merely a *World* reporter, it was necessary that I should conform to the regulations in the matter of carrying civilians on the cutter, so Captain Faunce obligingly appointed me as his clerk and signal officer, and I became the only newspaper man in the fleet.

There had been no announcement that our destination was Fort Sumter, but I believe the fact was pretty generally understood by the officers—the crew

remaining in entire ignorance of the nature of the cruise, or of the duties expected of them. Those on the *Harriet Lane* had enlisted only for cutter service, usually easy work, seldom involving deep-sea cruising or being away from anchorage at night. Certainly the idea of fighting was furthest from their thoughts. I may add that the *Lane* took on no extra stores or did anything to excite the suspicion that the vessel was bound on an adventurous voyage, except perhaps that she loaded an unusual amount of coal. When we left New York Harbour, on the morning of the 9th of April, 1861, not a soul on board knew positively whither she was bound, for she was despatched with "sealed orders," not to be opened until twelve hours had elapsed. The only sailing orders given were to steer south until the twelve hours had passed, after which we should learn our destination.

We saw none of our fleet at the time of sailing, nor until we were off Charleston, for that matter, though of this later. We steered south, according to orders, heading straight for a storm then gathering off Hatteras, that point where the brave little *Monitor* and so many other good ships lie buried. Toward evening, when the twelve hours were up, the official envelope was opened, and all hands then learned that we were on our way to a rendezvous off Charleston Bar, where we would meet other vessels and "report to the senior naval officer present" for further instructions. Furthermore, we were to haul down the revenue cutter ensign and pennant, and hoist in their stead the national ensign and navy pennant, and Captain Faunce was to announce to officers and men that the vessel had

been transferred from the Treasury to the Navy Department, and would hereafter be subject to the laws and regulations governing the same.

Captain Faunce called all hands aft and read to them his orders from the Secretary of the Treasury. The men listened attentively, but so far as I could see, their faces did not bear evidence that they were glad of the change. They had not been hired to fight, and patriotism in the North had not then reached a very exalted pitch. Besides, it was by no means certain that all of these men had made up their minds as to the rights or wrongs of the Southern Cause.

Captain Faunce, noting the lack of enthusiasm among the men, explained to them that in war time the laws specifically provided that all public armed vessels were held to be under the control of the Navy Department, and that the orders, therefore, were just, and must be obeyed without question or murmur.

At this, some of the foremost spirits spoke up, declaring that they had not entered the Revenue Cutter Service with the intention or expectation of going to war, and vigorously protested being put under fire against their will. They had set out on this cruise under false pretences, supposing they were simply shifting stations, and with no thought of going to battle.

The talk of these spokesmen had the effect of inciting a number of the crew to the verge of downright mutiny, and for a moment or two the situation looked alarming. Captain Faunce, however, was very cool. He reasoned with the men a little, and then he said:

"Boys, this is a serious business. I want you to understand that you are placing yourselves in a very dangerous position. I appreciate your surprise and point of view. Still, as your commanding officer, I will say right here and now that every man must do his duty and obey orders implicitly, *or, by God, he will never have a chance to see a gun fired in action!* My orders are to take the ship to Charleston and to report to the senior officer, and I'm going to do so if I have to bury half of this ship's company on the way. Go forward, now, and do your duty like good Americans." Then, turning to the boatswain, "Pipe down!" he said.

A good deal of talk was indulged in by the crew when they reached their own end of the vessel, but by midnight all hands were about their work cheerfully, and obeyed as promptly as if the revenue pennant were still at the masthead.

We now plunged full into the storm off Hatteras. The sea became very heavy and, loaded with coal as we were, we wallowed through the billows that broke over us continually, threatening to end our part of the expedition right there. At one time it was thought that to ease the vessel we should be obliged to throw some of our guns overboard. But the *Harriet Lane* proved to be an excellent sea boat, and on the 11th of April we were off Charleston Bar, with all hands eager to learn what our real duties were to be. If I remember rightly, the *Pawnee* was already there, and perhaps the *Baltic* and *Pocahontas*. At all events, we arrived about the same time—all but the three tugs, of which we had been deprived in the heavy storm off

Hatteras. We anchored a little closer to the Bar than the others, and Captain Faunce went aboard the *Pawnee,* the senior ship, to report our arrival, and to arrange for a code of signals which would be unintelligible to the enemy. The sea was still heavy, the sky dark and stormy, and all buoys had been removed from the channels. It was impossible for vessels of any size to go inside the Bar, and as our tugs still failed to appear we were at a loss what to do. As we lay there waiting and undetermined, an incident occurred which I have never seen recorded, but which seems to me worthy of note. A vessel suddenly appeared through the mist from behind the Bar, a passenger steamer, which was made out to be the *Nashville.* She had no colours set, and as she approached the fleet she refused to show them. Captain Faunce ordered one of the guns manned, and as she came still nearer turned to the gunner.

"Stop her!" he said, and a shot went skipping across her bows.

Immediately the United States ensign went to her gaff end, and she was allowed to proceed. The *Harriet Lane* had fired the first shotted gun of the war from the Union side. I may here note that the *Nashville* was subsequently converted into a Confederate privateer, to which we shall have cause to refer again in these papers, and it seems a strange coincidence that I should thus have seen the first shot fired upon her, and was to see the last, which ten months later would send her to the bottom of the sea.

Still at dusk on the evening of the 11th our ill-fated tugs had not arrived, and without them our

launches were of no avail.* Captain Faunce looked out over the gloomy, unmarked channel.

"For God's sake," he said, "I hope they don't expect us to take these big vessels over the Bar."

We knew that we had been located by the enemy, for small craft had been scouting around during the evening, returning to the Confederate forts. As for Anderson, it was unlikely that he knew anything of our arrival, or that the enemy would give him either time or opportunity to acquire this knowledge. Night came down, dark, stormy, and ominous.

There was no very sound sleep on any of the vessels. I turned in about midnight, but I was restless and wakeful. At length I was suddenly startled from a doze by a sound that not only wakened me, but brought me to my feet. It was the boom of a gun. From Fort Johnson a fiery shell had described an arc in the night and dropped close to the ill-fated Sumter. A moment later when I reached the deck, Morris Island had opened with a perfect roar of artillery. It was now half-past four in the morning, April 12th, 1861, and the Civil War, which was to continue through four years of the bitterest, bloodiest strife this nation has ever seen, had begun in earnest, at last.

I shall never forget the scene on board the *Harriet Lane* that memorable morning. The first shot had brought every man to the deck, and, standing on the wheelhouse or any high point for a better view, the men who but a day or two before had been ready to

* There were no steam launches in those days. The heavily laden boats would have been towed to the fort by the tugs.

mutiny rather than go into action, now screamed and swore and raved and demanded that they be led against these assailants of the old flag. Not one of them but would have laid down his life then, and it seemed for a time that our patriotism would get the better of our judgment and spur us to a useless sacrifice. We knew that we could do no good—that with the heavy sea and unmarked channels, and with the accuracy of the Confederate gun fire, vessels such as ours could never reach Sumter. We could only look on, and give vent to our feelings in violent language, and this we did in a manner that I have never seen equalled.

Yet we did formulate a plan of relief when it grew lighter. We found two small ice schooners lying near us off the bar. Our plan was to seize these vessels and use them to tow in our launches, with supplies and reinforcements. It was argued that as the vessels were loaded with ice they would not sink, even if their hulls were riddled with shot from the Confederate batteries. But with daylight the bombardment became so destructive that even this last resort was reluctantly abandoned.

I have never been able either with word or pen to express my feelings during that long, terrible bombardment. The morning was dark and lowering. Across the harbour the belching cannons told that the nation was rent asunder. It seemed to me that the end of the world was about due. When a little after seven o'clock we saw that Major Anderson was answering his assailants, gun for gun, we broke at last into cheers, though we could not hope for victory, for

we knew that his stores were about exhausted and that his ammunition was low.

All day the cannons thundered through the gloom. Night once more fell thick and stormy, and still the pounding did not cease. I think few on any of our vessels slept, and when morning came clear and bright, it only brought still heavier and fiercer cannonade, with red-hot shot from Fort Moultrie, followed by smoke and flames, and we knew that Fort Sumter was on fire.

We expected Anderson to surrender then. But the firing went on and the Stars and Stripes still waved above the doomed fort. Then, in the early afternoon, the old flag suddenly disappeared, and we knew that it had been shot away. But as suddenly it reappeared, a little lower down, but still waving above the ramparts, and we broke again and again into wild cheers.* Once more our would-be mutineers raved and swore and vowed that the day would come when they would avenge that striking down of the flag. But not long after a silence fell upon the vessels of our fleet, for there was a white flag waving above the walls of Sumter.

We know, now, that Major Anderson never raised that flag; that it was hoisted at the request of General Wigfall, who had come across to the fort, pretending authority from General Beauregard, and that he induced one of Major Anderson's officers to display the truce signal for the purpose of conference. We know that Wigfall at first waved the flag himself to try to

* It was hoisted by Sergeant Peter Hart, Major Anderson's old and faithful body-servant.

put a stop to the shots that were falling about him, much too close for comfort, and that, when the forts did not at once cease firing, he hopped down, terribly frightened, and begged one of Anderson's men to wave the white banner, and that this was done. But we did not know the facts then, or that Anderson, when he learned the trick of it, indignantly ordered the white flag down. To us it meant the end, and we were a sad company, especially as we saw small boats evidently bearing officers of rank leave the Confederate batteries for the battered fort. We had no means of communicating with the garrison, and for a long time we were left in suspense as to the number of lives lost and the terms of surrender.

But it was all over that evening. Everything was silent and we had learned the news. The fort had surrendered, though without loss of life, and the gallant little band had marched out with colours flying and drums beating, saluting the Stars and Stripes with fifty guns.

On the next day, Sunday, April 14th, Anderson and his men were taken on board the *Baltic,* and we set out on the return voyage to New York.

As the expedition was to all intents and purposes at an end, it was now my duty, as a reporter for the *World,* to be on the ship with Major Anderson. Captain Faunce kindly gave permission for my transfer to the *Baltic,* where I began at once to write the story of the fight from Major Anderson's own lips, continuing as he could tell it to me, for he was ill, exhausted, and sick at heart. Being the only newspaper man with the expedition, I had a valuable news "beat,"

and I wanted to make the most of it, you may be sure.

Yet I do not think I would have been able to get on such terms of confidence with Major Anderson but for a lucky accident. One of his officers, Lieutenant Truman Seymour, came to me just after leaving the Bar and said:

"I understand your name is Osbon."

"Yes, sir," I said, "that is correct."

"I wonder if you could be related to Dominie Osbon," was his next remark.

I replied, "I am his eldest son."

"Then you ought to know me," he said, "for my name is Truman Seymour."

"Yes," I answered, "your father was presiding elder of the Troy Conference. He was one of my father's best friends."

Seymour was very close to Major Anderson and introduced me in a manner which made the sick officer warm to me at once. I was with him almost constantly during the homeward trip, looking to his comfort, often reading to him from the New York papers, which he had not seen for a long time. In turn he told me the whole story of the fight, which is now common history and need not be set down here. He told me how the white flag had been raised without his knowledge, how when he came up and found it flying by Wigfall's request he had ordered it down, and had been begged by emissaries then arriving from Beauregard to let it remain until terms could be arranged. Major Anderson was a gentle, brave, God-fearing man, then but fifty-six years old, but his spirit and his

heart were broken. That he had been first to let the Stars and Stripes be hauled down was a heavy blow. He had brought away the torn and shattered banner, which ten years later was to become his winding sheet, and from across the tattered end he gave me a strip of the historic flag, a piece of which I still preserve.

XXIV

The Arrival in New York

OF course our expedition had been a failure, and there was a feeling among officers and men that our return would not be a matter of much honour and celebration. Mr. Fox realised this, and, learning that I was the only newspaper man on board, came to me before we reached New York and said:

"Mr. Osbon, I have a favour to ask of you. You are probably aware that I planned this expedition and urged upon Mr. Lincoln the importance of relieving Major Anderson. It has proven a failure from a variety of reasons over which I could have no control, and through no fault of mine. Nevertheless, I shall be singled out for adverse criticism, which will be undeserved. I desire to avoid this as much as possible, and I shall esteem it a special favour if you will make no mention of my name in connection with the affair, or that I was on board the *Baltic*. The matter has ended unfortunately, and I do not wish to be associated with it any more than necessary."

I was anxious to oblige Mr. Fox and I felt the truth of what he said. Indeed we were all more or less in the same boat, so in preparing my article I sang the praises of Anderson, Doubleday, Seymour and the others who had made the gallant fight for the flag,

with as little reference to the expedition as possible, omitting the name of Fox altogether. We all realised later that this was a mistake, a very annoying one for me, in after years; but it seemed the proper thing to do at the time.

We were now nearing Sandy Hook, and Major Anderson had prepared a report of the Sumter engagement, which was to be given to the telegraph boat as we passed the Hook. Besides being his reader, I had acted as his amanuensis, writing letters to his various friends in New York. He now handed the notes of his report to me, with the request that I read them and suggest any additions that might occur to me as necessary. He was ill and very weak at the time. As I looked through the matter my only thought was brevity for the sake of telegraphic economy. The report as he had written it was very full and accurate, but contained about three hundred words. My suggestion therefore was that it might be condensed.

"Yes," admitted Anderson, "but I'm too sick to do it. You do it for me."

I sat there by him and worked it down, sentence by sentence and word by word. When I had finished I read it to him, and he signed it with full approval. It contained less than a hundred and fifty words, and when the telegraph boat came alongside it was thrown to the news messengers in a hermetically sealed tin box, and was soon on the way to Washington. The message as sent, and as it stands in history to-day is as follows:

S.S. Baltic, off Sandy Hook, Apr. Eighteenth, ten-thirty, A. M., via New York.

HON. S. CAMERON, SEC'Y WAR, WASHN.

Having defended Fort Sumter for thirty-four hours, until the quarters were entirely burned, the main gates destroyed by fire, the gorge walls seriously injured, the magazine surrounded by flames, and its door closed from the effects of heat, four barrels and three cartridges of powder only being available and no provisions remaining but pork, I accepted terms of evacuation offered by General Beauregard, being the same offered by him on the 11th inst., prior to the commencement of hostilities, and marched out of the fort Sunday afternoon the 14th inst., with colours flying and drums beating, bringing away company and private property, and saluting my flag with fifty guns.

ROBERT ANDERSON,
Major First Artillery, Commanding.

I consider it one of the greatest honours of my life to have been the companion of Major Anderson during those few days of our return voyage, and to have been permitted to assist him in the preparation of this now historic message. I have known many great and noble men, but never a more lovable, unpretentious soul than that of Major Robert Anderson, the hero of Fort Sumter.

Arriving at New York, we found to our surprise that we were all heroes. Instead of being under a cloud because of our failure, the members of the expedition, next to those of Sumter itself, were covered with glory, simply because they had been witnesses of that first brave struggle. The nation was fairly

ablaze with patriotism, and ready to welcome and celebrate anyone from the front, especially when, as was the case with us, such messengers brought news. At the office of the *World,* which, as you may readily imagine, was triumphant in its great beat, I was the one object worthy of consideration. When the crowd poured in, Mr. Bangs made me get up on the counter and tell the story of Sumter to the assembled throng. I think I have never seen a wilder fever of excitement than throbbed and billowed among those listening men.

Everywhere were boys, running and crying war news. Everywhere were knots and groups of men discussing the great event.

But there was one disagreeable feature of our return. Gustavus Fox realised now that he had made a mistake by having his name withheld, and in his chagrin went so far as to declare that I had omitted the mention on my own account. Naturally I resented this charge, and told the truth. As a matter of fact, neither the withholding of his name nor the subsequent controversy did him any real harm, for his skill in preparing the expedition and his effort in doing the best he could were recognised in his appointment as Assistant Secretary of the Navy under Gideon Welles. But Mr. Fox always bore me ill-will, and in his position of brief authority the time was to come when he could wipe out what he perhaps considered an old and bitter score. But that is a story for another time.

XXV

I Join the "Herald" Staff and a Great Naval Expedition

EVEN after Sumter, the nation at large did not realise the magnitude of the struggle then beginning. President Lincoln issued a call for seventy-five thousand men, and volunteers came in as gaily as if the invitation were for a festival parade. The bloodless affair at Charleston had somehow created an impression that subsequent engagements would be of a like nature, and there was a general feeling on both sides that within a few brief weeks the little "unpleasantness" would be arranged, with perhaps just enough excitement to stir young blood without spilling it, and just enough explosion of powder to clear the air, once the smoke had blown away.

But then, in July, came the first battle of Bull Run, and when on the afternoon of that fatal day the carriage loads of spectators who had driven out from Washington in gala attire to witness a fine military spectacle came tearing back, pellmell, in a wild stampede; when the Union forces flung away arms and accoutrements as they fled in a mad panic of defeat; when men by the thousand lay bleeding upon the field, then at last the nation realised that it was plunged into a great and terrible conflict, the end of which

no man could foresee. Armies were mustered, ships were gathered, and men with graver faces enlisted for the serious business of war. I may say here that I did not get to Bull Run in time for the battle; but I met the crowds coming back, and I know they were in a hurry. I could tell by their appearance and the number of valuable things they threw away.

I remained with the *World* for several weeks after the Sumter expedition, but the financial status of that paper was then unusually precarious, and we reporters were frequently suspended because of a lack of funds with which to pay our salaries. Perhaps I ought to add that I was at the time receiving nine dollars a week, for work which in these days of more liberal newspaper methods would warrant the payment of anywhere from five to ten times that amount.

It was during one of my periodical retirements that I remembered how, after the "Stevens Battery" beat, Mr. Frederick Hudson, managing editor of the *Herald,* had sent for me through Mr. Hervey C. Calkins * of the same paper. Calkins was now more than ever of the opinion that a man who had been under fire and had a practical knowledge of the sea would be useful on the *Herald* staff. I was received most cordially by Mr. Hudson, who promptly offered me the position of naval editor at a salary of twenty-five dollars a week. As this was nearly three times what I was supposed to receive from the *World*—the actual proportion was much larger—I gladly accepted the place. I think I was the first man to fill that particular office

* Afterward founder of the Homeopathic Hospital, New York City.

on the *Herald* staff, and I found the employment most congenial.

But as the months passed and the war excitment increased, with vaster naval preparations, I began to feel that in some manner I must get into more active service. Old memories of days in Chinese and Argentine waters made me very restless to feel once more the deck of a vessel rock to the roar of cannon, and to see the cutlasses flash and the shells burst through the smoke of battle. One with a fondness for movement does not find it easy to forget these things, or to remain idle, even in old age.

I concluded to apply for a commission in the navy, and went on to Washington for that purpose. I was well acquainted with Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, and was offered by him the position of acting master's mate. I thanked him, but suggested that as I had been commander in a Navy and had been in action—something very few of our officers could boast in those days—I thought I was entitled to a better rating. Then I added:

"Mr. Welles, I should like to carry on my journalistic work. Suppose you give me a letter, so that I can serve in a naval staff capacity and at the same time act as a war correspondent."

The old gentleman thought it over a little, and then dictated to a secretary a letter to this effect:

To All Commanding Officers, U. S. Navy:

Mr. B. S. Osbon, a correspondent of the New York *Herald,* asks permission to accompany some of the expeditions going South, and the Department has no

objection to his acting in any staff capacity to which the commanding officer may see fit to appoint him, provided it does not interfere with the regulations of the Navy.

Respectfully,

GIDEON WELLES,
Secretary U. S. Navy.

A roving commission of this sort was precisely what I wished, and armed with it I returned to New York and reported to Mr. Hudson, who rejoiced with me that we should have a correspondent right in the front of things, and with sufficient practical knowledge to know what was going on. I would like to say, before going further, that Frederick Hudson was one of the noblest gentlemen and one of the ablest newspaper men I have ever known.

The North now began to assemble in Hampton Roads an expedition, consisting of a very large fleet and a body of military, the first object being to strike the South a hard blow at some point where the harbour and surrounding country would make it a valuable base for operations by land and sea. Port Royal, South Carolina, offered the finest harbour below the Chesapeake, and was a station from which pressure upon Savannah and Charleston could be brought to bear. With the exception of Hatteras Inlet, which was too shallow for large steamers, the North had no coaling station south of Hampton Roads, a very necessary adjunct in those days, when vessels were obliged to coal at frequent intervals. Port Royal was therefore selected as the fleet's first objective point, though it was a state secret, guarded as well as that

of any important movement during the war. There was a general impression, which was perhaps officially encouraged, that Charleston was to be the point of attack; but as preparations progressed the mystery became daily deeper, and public curiosity rose to a high pitch. Every day the papers printed big headlines about "The Great Naval Expedition," with surmises as to its probable destination. Washington correspondents were prodded to obtain facts, not for publication but as a basis upon which to arrange for future news. It was all of no avail. Commanding officers knew nothing. The President and the Secretary of the Navy were dumb.

One morning Mr. Hudson said to me:

"Mr. Osbon, I think you had better run over to Washington yourself. You have a practical idea of such matters, and I should like you to arrange, if possible, to accompany the expedition in some capacity that will give us an inside position on the news."

I was in Washington that evening, and at the office of Secretary Welles bright and early next morning. While waiting for him in Chief Clerk Faxon's room, I happened to notice a table covered with charts, and at a glance recognised a Coast Survey chart of Port Royal Harbour as the document uppermost on the pile.

"What is uppermost on the pile is uppermost in their minds," I thought. "The squadron is going to Port Royal." The Secretary entered his office just then, and I sent in my card. I was promptly admitted, and after greetings I said to him, "Mr. Welles, will

you kindly give me a letter to the commanding officer of the expedition that is going to Port Royal?"

The old gentleman stared at me in amazement.

"How did you know we were sending a fleet to Port Royal?" he demanded. "Nobody but the President, Captain Dupont, General Sherman, and myself know that."

"And me," I said.

"Who told you?"

"You did, Mr. Secretary, just now."

He stared at me for a moment, very sharply.

"Well," he said, "you are a good guesser, and you can go with the fleet. But you know what the violation of the Fifty-ninth Article of War means. If you publish or say anything concerning our plans, you will be arrested and tried by court-martial. Under the regulations you can be shot," and he closed the interview by giving me a letter to Captain Dupont, who had assembled the fleet and was to be flag officer of the expedition.

On my return to New York I told Mr. Hudson that I knew where the squadron was going, but that I was under a solemn obligation not to divulge the secret. He simply said:

"You will need some money, Mr. Osbon. How much do you want?"

I suggested that I go to Fortress Monroe to await the time of departure. Whereupon he gave me the necessary funds, with orders to draw as I wanted through the Adams Express Company.

It was now October (1861) and the fleet and troops were gathering rapidly. The *Wabash,* a fine steam

frigate of 3274 tons register, carrying forty-eight guns, was to be flagship of the expedition and her commander, Samuel Francis Dupont, was an able officer and a fine, good-natured man, a courtly gentleman of the old school. He received me cordially on my arrival at Hampton Roads, and assigned me quarters on his vessel.

The South Atlantic Squadron, so-called, consisted of eighteen fighting vessels * (some of them converted merchantmen), carrying a total of one hundred and fifty-five guns, all, I believe, of the old smoothbore patterns. With colliers and transports, the fleet numbered about fifty vessels, the largest ever assembled by the nation up to that time. Certainly it made a most imposing array, and the North could well be proud of her "Great Expedition" as it lay in Hampton Roads, waiting for orders to sail.

The military under General Thomas Sherman consisted of some twelve thousand troops, divided into three brigades, commanded respectively by Brigadier Generals Egbert L. Viele, Isaac J. Stevens, and H. G. Wright. The soldiers were chiefly from the West, and many of them had never seen a vessel before. They were fine, orderly fellows, and sang any number of Methodist hymns; but the sailors had a poor opinion of them. When the day came for embarkation, the landsmen's manœuvres in getting aboard the transports made a spectacle for gods and men. The

*The *Wabash, Susquehanna, Mohican, Seminole, Pawnee, Pocahontas, Unadilla, Ottawa, Pembina, Seneca, Vandalia, Isaac Smith, Bienville, R. B. Forbes, Mercury, Augusta, Penguin,* and *Curlew.* Only the *Wabash* is now in existence, serving as a militia receiving ship at Boston.

tars viewed them with scorn and derision, and then took pity on them, taking their guns and knapsacks, and helping them to clamber over the sides. When at last they were all aboard they sang another round of hymns, and the expedition was ready to start.

But we did not sail immediately. There were delays of one kind and another, and a full week went by before we were ready to weigh anchor. Meantime I had been transferred. Captain Leisgang, commander of the troop-ship *Matanzas,* came aboard the *Wabash* one morning, announced the fact that one of his officers was very ill, and asked to borrow a substitute from the flagship. Flag Officer Dupont said that he regretted very much that he was unable to grant the request. Then Leisgang saw me sitting at the table.

"Hello, Osbon!" he said, "why can't you come along with me?"

"That," I replied, "remains for the Flag Officer to say."

"If Mr. Osbon is willing to go, he has my permission," said Dupont, and I went on board the *Matanzas,* with the understanding that I was to return to the *Wabash* as soon as we reached our destination. On the *Matanzas* I was in the midst of the Methodist contingent, for the troops (48th New York Volunteers) on that vessel were commanded by one Colonel Perry, himself a Methodist minister, an excellent gentleman and a brave man, who had seen service in the Texan and Mexican wars, and who found it possible to fight and pray with equal ardour.

It was on the morning of Tuesday, October 29, 1861, that the South Atlantic Squadron left Hamp-

ton Roads. A gun fired at daylight was the signal for departure—the big *Wabash* with her forty-eight guns leading the way, the other vessels following in order, a splendid spectacle. Every paper in the land was filled with the news of the sailing of the great expedition whose destination remained still unknown to the anxious millions of the North.

XXVI

I Witness the Fall of Port Royal, and am Among the Wounded

IT was fair weather when we sailed, but, as was the case with the Sumter expedition, we ran into a heavy gale below Hatteras, which rapidly increased in fury, until by dusk on Friday, November 1, it was blowing a hurricane. A signal was now made from the flagship to abandon the order of sailing, and for every vessel to take care of itself, regardless of formation. It was a fearful storm, one of the worst known on the coast for years, and it is a wonder we did not lose half our fleet. Our poor landsmen were in a sad plight and not one of them ever expected to see home again, though most of them were too seasick to care. As it was, the *Isaac Smith* was obliged to throw her guns overboard, and one steamer, the *Governor,* was lost, though her battalion of six hundred marines, all but seven, were saved by the frigate *Sabine,* under the command of Captain Ringgold.

By Sunday, the 3d, the storm had abated; we now opened our sealed orders and for the first time knew officially that Port Royal was our destination. On the next morning we were off Port Royal Bar with about half the fleet, and by Tuesday morning all but the ill-fated *Governor* had reported. I now returned to the

Wabash, according to agreement, having been of no service on the *Matanzas,* as the second mate recovered his health and was on duty all the way down.

We now discovered that the Confederates, as well as ourselves, had in some manner learned our destination and were fully prepared. The two forts, Walker and Beauregard, were strongly garrisoned and together mounted forty-one guns, some of them English Whitworth rifled cannons, ably manned. Also, Commodore Tatnall's Mosquito Fleet had hurried down from Savannah to the support of the forts. Altogether it looked as if we were not going to have quite the easy time we had expected.

On the evening of the 4th some of the gunboats reconnoitering exchanged a few shots with Bay Point (Fort Walker), and on the morning of the 5th a slight scrimmage with Tatnall occurred, but nothing of any consequence. It was decided now to send in the *Mercury,* a small beam-engine steamer, to draw the fire of the forts, in order that we might calculate the number, class, and calibre of the enemy's guns. I went aboard the little vessel, as did Generals Sherman, Stevens, and Viele, and some of the other officers. There was no reticence on the part of the enemy as to exposing their strength. They let go at us with a will, the shot falling about us merrily. As each gun was fired I called its class and calibre, and General Sherman, who stood near me, said:

"How can you be sure of the size of those shot at this distance?"

"I am not sure," I said, "but I am used to measuring objects at sea with my eye, and I judge the

calibre from the ring of smoke that forms the instant the gun is fired."

It may interest the reader to know that later, when we landed, my tally was found to be correct.

We were under fire in the little *Mercury* for the better part of an hour, and while some of the missiles passed uncomfortably close, we came out unharmed, having acquired full information as to the enemy's armament; also, on my part, some notes for my paper and some crude sketches, which I made for *Harper's Weekly*. We now reported to the flagship and a general council of war was held. A chart was spread upon the table and everything was prepared to call the meeting to order, when I rose to leave the cabin. The Flag Officer checked me.

"Where are you going, Mr. Osbon?" he asked.

I said, "It has occurred to me that this is not the place for a newspaper man."

He replied very courteously, "Pray be seated. You are my guest. Besides, you have had considerable naval experience, and we may avail ourselves of your opinion."

The conference proceeded, I remaining a silent listener until the order of battle was taken up, when I suggested in an undertone to Captain John Rodgers, who sat beside me, that I thought the order should be reversed.

"Why so?" he asked.

"Because," I said, "as planned now the principal attack will be made with the ships coming down with the tide, and in event of any machinery being disabled a vessel could not be controlled so readily by the helm

as if she were heading the tide. In the latter case with the helm to port the tide itself would swing the vessel out of the angle of danger."

Captain Rodgers, through the Flag Officer, had me explain my suggestion to the council. It was adopted and the battle line was formed accordingly.

There was a gale on the 6th of November, which made it impossible to attack on that day as originally intended. But the morning of the 7th dawned fair and lovely, with sky and water wonderfully blue and calm.

At nine o'clock the signal was made for the advance. The fleet had been arranged in two divisions, the first comprising the *Wabash, Susquehanna, Mohican, Seminole, Pawnee, Unadilla, Ottawa, Pembina,* and the sloop *Vandalia* in tow of the *Isaac Smith,* whose armament had been thrown overboard in the storm. The other division was composed of the *Bienville, Seneca, Curlew,* and *Augusta.* The *Pocahontas, R. B. Forbes, Mercury,* and *Penguin* formed a reserve division. The army transports, which were anchored at a safe distance, were covered alow and aloft with the troops, who were enforced non-combatants, though deeply interested as spectators in the grand and novel sight which they were about to witness. The other newspaper correspondents were also there, for it was my fortune to be the only one that day in the line of battle.

We had other spectators. As the residents of Washington had driven out to behold the spectacle of Bull Run, so now from Beaufort, Charleston, Savannah, and all the country around, a crowd of excursionists

had gathered to witness the destruction of the Yankee fleet. Seven large steamers crowded with sightseers appeared around the headlands, one of them flying the English, and another the French flag, showing that consuls of these nations were aboard. They ranged themselves in the wide blue amphitheatre, exactly as if we were giving an exhibition for their benefit, and certainly on that perfect morning the Port Royal engagement came as near being a beautiful picture combat as can be found in all history.

In fine formation, we steamed up the channel at a six-knot gait—the beautiful big *Wabash* with her forty-eight guns leading the way. At exactly 9.26 an opening gun from Fort Walker was fired, and a moment later Fort Beauregard, on the right, presented compliments. Then the *Wabash* opened with her ten-inch pivots, and within five minutes we let go with our broadsides and the entire fleet was in action. Our sightseers were beholding as grand a spectacle as the world will ever produce.

As was usual in those days, our marksmanship was far superior to that of the artillerists on shore, and while most of our shells landed fairly well, those of the Confederates went whizzing over our heads, and it was not until we had made it pretty uncomfortable for them that they at last secured the range. We had begun firing at a distance of about fifteen hundred yards, and were soon within eight hundred—a range which to-day would be absolutely fatal. Even then it was close work; but we drew still closer with each turn, until we were within six hundred yards and the fire was very hot and dangerous on both sides. Cer-

tainly the enemy stood up in a masterly way, considering that they were novices in the art of war.

Poor Tatnall's little flotilla, however, made but a feeble showing. At the opening of the fight he began popping away at us from his position at the mouth of Skulk Creek; but the range was too long and his marksmanship too poor to cause much annoyance. In fact, I do not think Flag Officer Dupont even remembered his existence until I said, "Flag Officer, that fellow over there is firing at us; can't we do something for him?" But Commodore Tatnall had already decided that his Mosquito Fleet did not belong in that battle, and before a vessel could be sent after him he had retired up Skulk Creek to a place of safety.

A good deal has been made of the fact that Admiral Dewey at Manila paused long enough in the midst of fighting to withdraw and let his men have breakfast; but this was not altogether a new idea. During the second round at Port Royal a hawser got afoul of our propeller and Flag Officer Dupont, always thoughtful, passed the word to give the men a quick luncheon, which they ate very willingly, though we were then under fire.

It was about this time that I was wounded—most strangely, in the fact that while my wound was disastrous it was wholly painless. The fire of the enemy had become exceedingly accurate and the shells were bursting all around. With the Flag Officer and his staff I was standing on the bridge and our group made a pretty target for the gunners on shore. Dupont in his polite manner said presently,

"Gentlemen, I would suggest that some of you

had better leave the bridge. If our friends over there should drop a shell among us, we might lose some valuable officers."

Being the junior and inferior officer of the crowd, I retired at once to the spar deck, where a shell came through our bulwarks and gave me a severe shake-up. Remembering the old adage that lightning never strikes twice in the same place, I went to the shattered port to look out and to continue my notes of the fight. As I leaned over, one of our own guns was fired, and the gromet—a wadding of rope yarn—blew back into my long whiskers, and in an instant my face was in flames. It took me but a second to extinguish the conflagration; but it was too late to save even a respectable remnant of a beard whose glory had excited the envy of even the Prince of Wales. I hurried below, took a pair of shears and trimmed my whiskers à la Grant. When I returned to the deck one of the officers said to me:

"Well, sir, where in the devil did you come from?"

I saw in a moment that he did not recognise me, and I said:

"I came up from below, sir. My name is Osbon of the *Wabash,* sir."

The shells were flying about pretty thickly just then and it was a poor time to discuss matters, but he stared at me for several seconds before he could take it in.

"In the name of heaven what is the matter with you?" he asked.

"I have been severely wounded," I replied, "in the whiskers."

I now hurried aloft and took up a position on the bunt of the foresail, where above the smoke I had an unobstructed view, and from my lofty perch was enabled to report the enemy's movements to the Flag Officer on the bridge. From this point of vantage I witnessed one of the rarest of my experiences afloat—a mighty duel between two brothers, Thomas and Percival Drayton.

General Thomas Drayton commanded Fort Walker and Captain Percival Drayton was in command of the *Pocahontas* of our fleet. The *Pocahontas* had taken up a position on the flank of the fort, where a thirty-two pounder was making it decidedly uncomfortable for those on board. The exchange of fire between the vessel and the fort was quick and hot, and it looked for a time as if the Secession brother on shore was going to get the best of it. Then point by point the little *Pocahontas* worked herself around into position for an enfilading fire, and with a brilliant display of marksmanship dismounted the annoying gun of the bad brother and drove him and his men helter-skelter from their position. Up there on the foresail where I could see it all, I whooped and cheered for Percival Drayton, whom later with Farragut's fleet at New Orleans, I was to know as a near and dear friend, and who to-day sleeps in Trinity churchyard.

With each circling of the forts we drew in closer and closer until the distance was narrowed down to four hundred yards, and the smaller guns poured in upon the enemy a fire that it was hardly possible for even the oldest veterans to withstand. Just at this juncture I saw the little beam-engine steamer, the

Mercury, slip into a shallow bight within two hundred yards of Fort Walker, and lying there almost unnoticed in the smoke, begin popping away with her thirty-pound Parrot gun at a big Whitworth, which was the enemy's most dangerous piece. She was so tiny—and her captain had counted on this fact—that either the enemy did not see her, or could not hit her where she lay. Shot after shot she sent at that Whitworth, then all at once her gunner got the exact aim and over went the big gun, to be of no more service in that action, whereupon the little *Mercury* steamed away like a victorious bantam rooster, though not before she had observed from her close range that the Confederates were gathering their belongings in wild haste and preparing to desert the fort. The *Mercury* was the first to note this, but a moment later the *Ottawa* signalled the flagship that the enemy was evacuating.

I had been so busy watching the brilliant exploit of the *Mercury* that I had not observed what was happening within the fort, until I was hailed by an officer from below who asked me if I had noticed that the "Rebs" were "skedaddling," that being a favourite term for retreat in those days.

I took one look and shouted back, "Yes, sir, they are taking to the woods as fast as their legs can carry them. The fort is ours!"

A moment later the signal flags from the *Wabash* announced the order "Cease Firing," and the engagement was at an end. It was five minutes of two when the last gun was fired. The battle that gave us Port Royal had lasted three and one-half hours. For miles

around the blue water was dotted with wooden shell-cases, a record of the thousands of shots fired.

A whaleboat was now launched from the *Wabash,* and Commander John Rodgers was sent to Fort Walker to demand the surrender of the works. I accompanied him, and as the boat touched the gravelly beach the men jumped out, and taking Captain Rodgers and myself on their shoulders landed us dryshod on the soil of South Carolina. We hurried forward, Rodgers with a Union flag under his arm, the boat's crew following.

When we climbed over the works we found no one there to surrender them. The ground was strewn with belongings of every description, but the place was deserted. In another minute the Stars and Stripes were flying above Fort Walker, and for miles around the air was rent with cheers of the soldiers and sailors of the combined fleets. The boys on the transports were glad they had come, now. I did not see it, for I was not close enough, but I was told they acted like mad. Some clapped their hands and shouted "Glory!" —some danced and kept on dancing as if they would never stop, and nearly all of them broke out into Methodist hymns. As for the excursionists, they had sailed away as fast as possible, perhaps fearing, like our own spectators at Bull Run, that they would all be captured and shot at sunrise.

The troop ships now weighed anchor, and coming up the harbour began their work of disembarkation, which continued until the last man was on Carolina soil, all eager for a view of the works, every man anxious for some trophy of the victory. There were plenty

of these, for, as our defeated troops had scattered their accoutrements at Bull Run, so those who had fled from Port Royal had strewn their belongings over the meadows, and among them, curiously enough, were some of the same knapsacks that our boys had lost at the Bull Run disaster. Among other things I found an opera glass which had belonged to Thomas Drayton, and which I afterwards presented to his brother Percival. Captain Rodgers found a beautiful Damascus sword, evidently an heirloom, its hilt studded with diamonds. The officer must have been in a great hurry who left that behind. I suppose it got between his legs and annoyed him as he ran.

We took possession of Fort Beauregard next morning (November 8), it having been likewise abandoned, though somewhat less hastily. I went over with Captain Ammen of the *Seneca,* and we hoisted a Union flag above a building that had been used as headquarters. We then went over to the camp half a mile from the fort, and returning heard an explosion which proved to be from a mine under the headquarters building. One of our sailors had stumbled over a wire attached to a primer and fired the gunpowder left for the purpose of blowing us up when we took possession. The unlucky cause of the disaster was blown some distance and considerably stunned, but was otherwise unhurt. We were all of us very careful to look for wires after this incident.

The casualties on both sides at Port Royal were very small, considering the amount of ammunition expended and the close ranges. We lost no vessels and in our entire fleet but eight men were killed and twen-

ty-three wounded. The Confederate losses were eleven killed, forty-eight wounded, four missing. Among other things, the fight demonstrated that the old theory of one gun in a fort is worth five on board ship was a false proposition. To be sure, the sea was smooth and we had more experienced gunners, so perhaps a conclusion drawn entirely from the Port Royal engagement would be equally erroneous. We were also ably commanded. Flag Officer Dupont, one of the old-time, polished naval officers, was a splendid seaman and an up-to-date fighter, admired alike by officers and men. In battle he was as cool and clear-sighted as anyone I ever saw under fire. Yet at Port Royal he was for the first time called upon to direct an engagement of magnitude and importance. And such it was, for, small as had been the loss of life, an action between eighteen vessels and two well-armed forts, not to mention Commodore Tatnall's Mosquito Fleet, was, in those days at least, a battle of no small proportions, while the result gave us what was probably the most important naval station of the Civil War. To-day our poorest vessel could destroy such works in less time than I have taken to tell this story. It would begin firing at a range of four miles, and by the time it was within hailing distance, forts, enemy, and guns would be out of action. But this is an unprofitable conclusion, for to-day there would also be better fortifications, with better guns.

XXVII

I Undertake a Secret Mission for Secretary Welles

I HAVE now reached an incident which I have never until this time considered it proper to relate. The story can do no harm now—the international distrust of those days is dead, as is, I believe, every man in any way concerned in the matter, except myself.

I returned from Port Royal on the *Bienville*. My story of the battle was regarded as a beat by the *Herald*. Set in small solid type it filled two pages. My sketches for *Harper's Weekly* also were well received and prominently displayed, covering four pages of the issue of November 30. At Washington I was welcomed by Secretary Welles, who had not forgotten my discovery of the fleet's destination, as you will see.

There was a good deal of bitterness between England and the Northern States at this time, and the Government at Washington was deeply interested in the despatches forwarded by the British Minister to his Home Government. It was known that England was friendly to the Confederacy and willing to aid it secretly, if not by open recognition. Under such conditions, it became necessary to know as much as possible of what was passing to and fro between Washington and London in the form of cryptograms; and

while most of this matter went by messenger or mail to New York, there were many cipher telegrams sent at the last moment to catch the outgoing steamer, there being no ocean cable at that time. At the telegraph office all such messages were subjected to examination and copies of them were made. After a brief conversation with Secretary Welles, the old gentleman brought out one of these cipher copies and placing it in my hands said:

"Mr. Osbon, you have a way of finding out secrets. Do you think you can solve that? If you can, it will be worth five thousand dollars to you."

I did not know even the nature of the paper at the time, but I saw that it was a cipher made up partly of words and partly of a combination of numerals, usually in groups of four figures. Something about it suggested to me a naval signal book, and the thought occurred that perhaps if we had a copy of that used by the British service we might unravel the mystery. I studied the paper for some time, and the more I considered the matter, the more certain I became that the British naval signal book would furnish the key. I finally informed Mr. Welles that I believed I could work the matter out, but that I would need several days' leave from my paper; also perfect copies of the ciphers. The former I obtained without difficulty, and the latter were promptly supplied. With them in an inner pocket I left that night for Boston, where a British man-of-war was lying. It was my purpose to secure her signal book at whatever hazard and by whatever means, for in such cases the old adage of "All is fair in love and war" holds true.

What I had undertaken to do was a risky business. The two nations were at peace, outwardly at least, and if my attempt were detected I could expect neither mercy from one side nor succour from the other. I think, however, I gave this phase of the matter but slight consideration. My chief thought was of the signal book, and how to get it.

Arriving at Boston, I promptly used my naval acquaintance to get introductions to the officers in Her Majesty's service, and by a diplomatic course of wining and dining presently made myself a welcome visitor on Her Majesty's vessel. Indeed, I soon became a favourite with all on board, especially with the signal officer, to whom I told my best yarns, often inviting him to a dinner ashore to hear them. Of course, this resulted in return invitations, and sometimes it happened that when I wished to brush my hair or otherwise attend to my toilet I was invited to make use of his room for that purpose.

It was but a brief time before I had located the coveted signal book—a tidily bound volume with leaden plates riveted to the corners, so that in event of capture it could be handily dropped overboard and lost. The whole was encased in a canvas bag, suspended by a shoulder-strap. During my next visit I had sufficient opportunity to examine the book for a few minutes, and found to my delight that it did, in reality, furnish the key I wanted. I had memorised a few of the cryptographic words, and with the book before me and the signal officer at muster on deck I verified my conclusions. The next thing in order was to secure this priceless volume. I reasoned that as

there were no other English vessels nearby, it might be weeks before the book would be needed, and that if I could remove the contents from the covers, substituting them with leaves of the same bulk and appearance, there would be a good chance not only to get safely clear of the vessel, but for a considerable period to elapse before the loss was discovered, by which time it would be by no means certain when the abstraction had occurred.

I therefore took careful measurements, and the next time I boarded the ship my dummy book was with me—a copy of Ray's Arithmetic, if I remember correctly—picked up on a secondhand stall. That was a foggy night, and I lingered late. When I mentioned going ashore, my friend, the signal officer, protested, and offered me the use of his room. I had hardly dared hope for this stroke of fortune.

I had plenty of time that night to do the job in a neat and workmanlike manner. I was really proud of the resemblance the Ray's Arithmetic bore to the signal book when it was properly in its neat covers and riveted leaden plates. Then, after carefully adjusting my prize to its new dress, I lay down and slept the sleep that comes of well-doing and a clear conscience.

I did not hurry away next morning—that would not do. I even lingered a little, and finally bade them all good-bye, with a good deal of regret I must own, for they were jolly fellows.

Arriving on shore, I lost no time in getting a train for the Capital, and once aboard the strain told on me, for I had been keyed to a pretty high pitch dur-

ing those days in Boston, and I dozed and slept most of the day and all that night without a break.

But I was at the Department next morning, bright and early, and when the Secretary had glanced over his mail he sent for me to come to his private office.

"Well, Mr. Osbon," he said, "you have made a long stay. Have you been able to read those telegrams yet?"

I drew up a chair beside him, and pulling out a cipher of over one hundred and fifty words, read to him a well connected, perfectly intelligible, highly interesting and important communication from the British Minister to the Home Secretary. I followed this with three or four other messages of a like tenor. Secretary Welles for a moment said nothing at all, but I could see that he was amazed. Presently he seized my hand and said.

"Where in heaven's name did you get the key? Tell me all about it."

"Mr. Welles," I said, "I think it is as well for the present that you should not know. Some trouble may come out of it, and it is better that you, as a government official, should be in a position to know nothing."

The Secretary agreed to this readily enough, and I went away with a bundle of the Minister's messages, all of which I translated in due season. Somewhat later I placed the signal book itself in the Secretary's hands. He had promised me five thousand dollars for the solution, to say nothing of the key itself. No word of the payment had been mentioned since my return, and I was to have a little joke at his expense.

"Mr. Secretary," I said, "I was to have five thou-

sand dollars to decipher those telegrams—and no mention was made of the key in our bargain. I suppose that will be extra."

He laughed and said, "You are right. Name your price, and we'll see if it is fair."

"Mr. Welles," I said, "I do not want any compensation whatever for a job like that. What I did was for the sake of the nation. Nothing else could justify it. All I ask of this Government is that they stand at my back and save my neck, in case of trouble."

But trouble never came. It is more than likely that the loss of the signal book was not discovered by the English officer for months, and then in some foreign port. I have no idea that I was ever connected with the matter, or that anybody on the vessel, except the signal officer, ever knew that the book had been taken. It is easy to imagine that he would not care to confess his loss, and that he might make it convenient to stumble near the rail, and so by "accident" let the little tidily-bound, lead-covered Ray's Arithmetic slip into the ocean that holds so many secrets in its fathomless bosom. My conscience has never troubled me for the part I played, for, as I have said, it was not for gain but to outwit a secret enemy, and for a nation which I had been always eager to serve, and was still to serve to the best of my limited ability, as we shall see.

XXVIII

Some Journalistic Adventures

IT was during November, 1861, that I made a journalistic attempt which resulted somewhat less gloriously than those undertaken hitherto. On the 7th, the day of our bombardment of Port Royal, James M. Mason, of Virginia, and John Slidell, of Louisiana, Confederate envoys to Great Britain and France, embarked on the English mail steamer *Trent,* at Havana. On the next day the United States steamship *San Jacinto,* Captain Wilkes, overhauled the *Trent* in the Bahama channel and forcibly removed Mason and Slidell as prisoners of war. The affair being immediately reported on both sides of the water, great excitement ensued. The feeling between England and America became more bitter. England made many stormy threats, though Captain Wilkes had only followed a British precedent, exactly as laid down. The final result was an adjustment of rights and privileges between the two nations, and a better understanding all around, but as this is everybody's history I need not continue the general details.

My chief interest in the matter was to make news of it for my paper. The *San Jacinto,* with the prisoners, was on the way to Fort Warren, in Boston Harbour, and it was Mr. Hudson's request that I

meet the vessel and interview Captain Wilkes. Also, if possible, Messrs. Mason and Slidell.

Now there were strict orders that no correspondent should enter Fort Warren, and I knew the chances were against my success. Nevertheless I proceeded to Boston, and asked Captain William L. Hudson, Commandant of the navy yard, to give me a letter of introduction to Captain Wilkes, whom he knew. This he did willingly enough, and armed with the official looking envelope, I boldly proceeded to Fort Warren and announced that I had a letter for Captain Wilkes to be delivered on arrival, leaving them to infer, if they wished to do so, that it was as official as it outwardly appeared. My mission was harmless enough and I had told no untruth, but I must admit that to some extent I had concealed the truth, and I suppose I was punished accordingly.

No one in Fort Warren suspected my errand there, or anything out of the way, and for a few days I was an honoured guest. But then, all of a sudden, there appeared a sergeant of artillery who had met me at Fortress Monroe. He was a pleasant fellow and very kindly remembered me. He said nothing to me of my vocation, but I knew he remembered that, too. I knew that he guessed my errand in Fort Warren, and that he would do his duty in reporting the matter to the commandant, who would likewise do his duty in detaining me indefinitely when I got ready to go. It was a pleasant place, but I did not wish to remain there permanently. I wanted to go away from it. I had lost interest in Mason and Slidell and I wanted to go now, immediately, before the *San Jacinto* arrived. The

officers themselves gave me no hint of coming trouble, but one of their servants, a friendly fellow, very quietly told me what would happen. They were in no hurry to take me in charge. Fort Warren being located on an island, with plenty of guards, it was not thought probable that I could reach the mainland.

Yet this was what I decided to do. The morning after my interview with the kindly disposed servant I went for a walk on the beach. It was blowing a living gale of wind, and nobody but a fool or a sailor would attempt to cross the harbour in a small boat on such a day. To me, however, the only difficulty was in being permitted to try. A little dory was lying on the beach, and I asked the sentinel who was parading up and down if he objected to my taking a little pull to stretch my arms. He did not object, but he thought I would soon get my fill of it. I carried an umbrella, as it had been showery, and with this I got into the boat. Then I pulled up and down a few times in the rough water, edging out farther with each tack, until finally, when I thought it the proper moment, I squared away, hoisted my umbrella as a sail, and with an oar for a rudder bade Fort Warren good-bye.

The sentinel, seeing this, evidently suspected that something was wrong, and must immediately have passed the word to the officers, who doubtless returned orders to fire, for in a minute or two he levelled his musket, and a bullet struck the water, though some distance away. I decided that he was a poor shot and that I would go on. Besides, I had always been bullet-proof and had faith in my lucky star. The only question was whether I could pull faster than the umbrella

would propel me. I concluded to stick to the umbrella, for the wind was very strong out there and I was making good headway.

Meantime the sentinel had been joined by several companions-in-arms, and they now let loose a volley at me, then another and another. But perhaps they were recruits, for their aim was poor and by this time the range was long. The little dory fairly skimmed the waves, and more than half the time there were great billows between me and the shore, and it may be that these kept some of the balls from hitting me. At all events, the firing presently ceased and I made the passage across without further interference, folded my faithful umbrella, left the dory at the navy yard, and took the first train for New York, where, with a good deal of humiliation, I confessed to Mr. Hudson that Mason and Slidell would have to be received at Fort Warren without my assistance.

I was to have better success with my next adventurous attempt. The Confederates, who were still in possession of Norfolk, had raised a sunken vessel, the *Merrimac,* at the Gosport Navy yard, and converted her into the ironclad which later was to become such a terror to our navy at Hampton Roads. Reports of the construction of this vessel had come to the North, and there was a great desire on the part of everybody to know something of her plan and appearance. I was perfectly familiar with all the waters of Hampton Roads, and went down to Fortress Monroe to see what could be done in the matter. Arriving there, I decided I would have a look at the *Merrimac* on my own account, even at the risk of a punctured skin.

I therefore wrote to Mr. Hudson my plan, asking him to send me down a sixteen-foot Hell Gate pilot-boat, such as was used for boarding vessels in Long Island Sound. Mr. Hudson was a man of prompt action. The boat came almost immediately, and one night when a light fog lay on the river I made up my mind to undertake the job planned.

I prepared for the occasion by covering my tholepins with sheepskin in order to make no noise with my oars. Then with a compass and a lead line in the boat I pulled softly across past the Sewell Point batteries, which would have given me a lively time had they seen me, up around Crainey Island—on up the Elizabeth River to the Gosport Yard, where the *Merrimac* lay. I expected to have to get very close to the vessel before I could get a look at her, but the fog had lightened a good deal by the time I was in her neighbourhood and the night was not dark. When within a hundred yards of her I had an excellent view of the monster which was so soon to descend upon our fleet of wooden vessels then lying in Hampton Roads.

I fixed her outlines and proportions in my mind and returning undiscovered wrote a description of her for the *Herald,* and made a sketch for *Harper's Weekly.* I also reported the matter to General Wool, commander of the troops at Fortress Monroe—a friend from childhood. I did not report to Commodore Goldsborough, in command of the fleet, for I must say that, in common with a good many others who were on the ground, I could muster no great admiration for this officer. I do not presume to question his bravery, but certainly his policy of delay and discre-

tion was not of a sort to awaken enthusiasm in any quarter.*

Having found the vessel to be comparatively easy of access, I proposed to General Wool that I would lead a boarding party to capture and destroy her. That was the sort of work I knew best, and nothing would have given me greater joy than to have gone up there on a dark night with a band of good fellows for a lively hand-to-hand bout of the old-fashioned kind. I believe we would have been successful, too, but General Wool would not give his consent, for the reason, as he said, that Goldsborough would regard it as a trespass on his special field of action. I had by this time become very tired of the monotonous routine of Fortress Monroe, and was only too glad that an opportunity now presented itself for more congenial service both to my paper and my country.

* On March 8, 1862, the *Merrimac* destroyed the *Congress* and the *Cumberland,* and it was expected she would annihilate the rest of the fleet next morning. The little *Monitor,* commanded by John L. Worden, arrived that night, and March 9, 1862, checked the *Merrimac* in her work of destruction and drove her back, crippled and defeated, to her lair beyond Crainey Island. Yet even after this, she still remained a menace, and had only to show herself in the channel to cause the direst commotion in the neighbourhood of Commodore Goldsborough's fleet.

XXIX

An Expedition Against New Orleans

I HAVE now reached the beginning of what is to me the most remarkable portion of my history—indeed, of any story of naval warfare. I refer to the successful passage of the forts below New Orleans by the Federal fleet under Flag Officer David Glasgow Farragut on the 24th of April, 1862.

During the latter part of 1861 Commander David D. Porter had urged upon President Lincoln the necessity of capturing New Orleans as an important step in weakening the Confederacy by cutting it in half, as it were, and closing one of its chief ports of supplies. The original plan was to reduce Forts Jackson and St. Philip, two strongholds built on opposite banks of the Mississippi, about sixty miles below New Orleans, with a fleet of mortar boats, in order that a land force might ascend the river and occupy the city. Commander Porter had full confidence in the effectiveness of mortar fire, and a fleet of bomb-vessels—consisting of twenty-two small schooners, each carrying one 13-inch mortar, and from two to four thirty-two pound guns for defence—was eventually organised, with a land force of about fifteen thousand men under command of General Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts. There was also to be a small fleet of tugs and armed steamers to tow and protect the mor-

tar fleet, and of these the *Harriet Lane,* which has already appeared twice in these annals—once in the service of the Prince of Wales, and again in the expedition against Sumter—was to carry the flag.*

But as the expedition began to materialise, the original plan was amplified, and a feature was added without which its success would have been extremely doubtful. A powerful fleet of war vessels was organised for the purpose of running by the forts, in event of the mortars failing to accomplish all that Porter had predicted.

As had been the case with former expeditions, the plan and purpose of this one were at first kept secret by the Department; but as it had been found that I

*The *Harriet Lane* does not appear in these pages after the New Orleans episode. Her subsequent career was eventful. She assisted in the attack on the Vicksburg batteries, June 28th, 1862, assisted in capturing Galveston, Texas, October 9th, 1862, and was captured by boarding parties in Galveston Harbor, January 1st, 1863, Commander Wainwright and Lieutenant-Commander Lee being killed. She then became a blockade runner, and at the close of the war was converted into a sailing vessel. Her end was unknown to the writer until these papers appeared in magazine form, when the following interesting letter was received.

San Francisco, Cal., Feb. 14, 1906.

Dear Sir:—Your footnote concerning the *Harriet Lane,* in your story "A Sailor of Fortune," now running in *Pearson's Magazine,* has led me to write you as follows:

On or about April 10th, 1884, the British ship *Galgate* left Liverpool, England, bound for Sidney, N. S. W.

While on the voyage, and about fifty miles off the coast of Pernambuco, a vessel was sighted flying signals of distress. The *Galgate* hove to and put out a boat. On boarding the bark she was discovered to be the *George P. Ritchie,* lumber laden from Brunswick, Georgia, formerly the gunboat *Harriet Lane.* She

did not "leak" information, perhaps, also, because of services rendered, I received an inkling of what was in progress, and one morning in December, 1861, I applied to Commander Porter for an appointment as his secretary and fleet signal officer, with the privilege of continuing my newspaper work. My offer was promptly accepted, and I was ordered to report on board the *Harriet Lane* when the fleet was ready to sail.

But with the alteration and enlargement of Porter's idea there appeared a new commander—one whose name shall forever rank with those of the greatest naval heroes in history.

Captain David G. Farragut had recently been relieved of his command of the *Brooklyn,* and had re-

was barely afloat, the crew having been at the pumps for twenty-nine days and the captain having broken his arm.

We took off the crew of six men, including the captain. Then we returned, and having sprinkled kerosene all over her set her afire. That night the *Galgate* met several steamers, doubtless attracted by the blazing ship, and we put the crew aboard one of them.

The water-logged vessel belonged to the United States, and I, being the only American aboard the English ship, was naturally curious, and the information connecting the *George P. Ritchie* with the *Harriet Lane* was given me by the captain. The only boat aboard was a little skiff capable of holding not more than two persons, and being lumber laden was the reason they had stuck to her. The only thing outside the crew we rescued was a piano, which we got out by chopping through the deck.

The agents of the *Galgate* are or were Balfour, Williamson & Co., of James Street, Liverpool, England.

The writer was a seaman aboard the *Galgate.*

Respectfully,

J. A. Simpson.

1705 Baker Street, San Francisco, Cal.

tired to his home at Norfolk, Virginia, only to leave it for the reason that he was told that men of his views could not remain residents of that disloyal city.

"Well, then I can live elsewhere," was Farragut's reply, and he removed with his little family to Hastings-on-the-Hudson, to await the time when his country should need his services. The time had now come. Farragut had served under Porter's father, and as a boy of eleven had been with him on the *Essex* in a terrible fight off Valparaiso. The younger men had always been friends, and Commander Porter now suggested to the Department that Farragut be placed in command of the squadron of the expedition as senior or flag officer, himself to retain the mortar flotilla, subject to Farragut's orders.

It was on the morning of January 9th, 1862, that Farragut was ordered to report to Commodore Pendergast at Philadelphia and to hoist his flag on the fine sloop of war *Hartford*. Eleven days later he received from Secretary Welles explicit instructions as to his movements,* and it was on the same day, Janu-

* NAVY DEPARTMENT, January 20th, 1862.

SIR: When the *Hartford* is in all respects ready for sea, you will proceed to the Gulf of Mexico, with all possible despatch, and communicate with Flag Officer W. W. McKean, who is directed by the enclosed despatch to transfer to you the command of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron. . . .

There will be attached to your squadron a fleet of bomb-vessels, and armed steamers enough to manage them, all under command of Commander David D. Porter, who will be directed to report to you. As fast as these vessels are got ready they will be sent to Key West to await the arrival of all, and the commanding officers, who will be permitted to organise and practise them at that port.

ary 20th, that I learned details of these things from Commander Porter himself, then at the Brooklyn Navy yard, on board the *Harriet Lane*. As Porter unfolded the new plan I began to fear that my hope of being in the front of activity was not likely to be realised. A mortar flotilla, however noisy, would be a comparatively quiet place when real battle with broadsides at close range, and ramming and boarding parties, might be going on not far away. I suppose he saw my rueful look, for he said:

"Look here, you'd better go with David. You'll have more fun and get more news with him. I'll give you a letter, and if he doesn't want you, come with me, anyhow."

When these formidable mortars arrive, and you are completely ready, you will collect such vessels as can be spared from the blockade and proceed up the Mississippi River, and reduce the defences which guard the approaches to New Orleans, when you will appear off that city and take possession of it under the guns of your squadron, and hoist the American Flag therein, keeping possession until troops can be sent to you. . . . As you have expressed yourself perfectly satisfied with the force given to you, and as many more powerful vessels will be added before you can commence operations, the Department and the country will require of you success. . . . There are other operations of minor importance which will commend themselves to your judgment and skill, but which must not be allowed to interfere with the great object in view—the certain capture of the city of New Orleans.

Destroy the armed barriers which these deluded people have raised up against the power of the United States Government, and shoot down those who war against the Union; but cultivate with cordiality the first returning reason, which is sure to follow your success. Respectfully, etc.,

GIDEON WELLES.

To Flag Officer D. G. Farragut,
Appointed to command Western Gulf Blockading Squadron.

He wrote the letter at once, and with it in my pocket I caught the first train for Philadelphia. I found Farragut at the Continental Hotel, where he had just finished dinner, and as he read my letter I mentally took his measure, and felt at once I would accept any position that such a man might offer me.

The letter was of considerable length and he read it carefully. When he had finished he turned to me and said:

"Mr. Osbon, I am glad to meet you and should be pleased to have you in the flagship. But I can tender you only the position of clerk, as I have already appointed my secretary. The clerkship pays a salary of fifty dollars per month."

I did not hesitate.

"Thank you," I said, "I shall be only too happy to accept, and I shall do my best to fill the place."

Without further ado he called his secretary and ordered him to make out my appointment, which read as follows:

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 20th, 1862.

SIR: You are hereby appointed Clerk to Flag Officer of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, and will report to Commander Wainwright, who will assign you quarters.

Yours very respectfully,

D. G. FARRAGUT,
Flag Officer.

To Mr. B. S. Osbon, New York City.

Our entire interview did not last twenty minutes. My appointment in my pocket, I hurried to New York for my dunnage, and caught a train back to Philadelphia the following morning. But our flag-

ship, the *Hartford,* had dropped down to Newcastle, for the ice was then very heavy in the Delaware, and there was danger of being frozen in. It required several days to fill our magazines from Fort Mifflin, but on the 2d of February we finally left Hampton Roads for the South, touching at Port Royal, where, three months before, with Dupont, on the *Wabash,* I had witnessed the reduction of Forts Walker and Beauregard, as already recorded.

The squadron was ordered to assemble off Key West, and we saw none of our vessels on the way down. Some were to come from Boston, others from New York, one from the West Indies, and whatever could be spared from the fleet already doing duty off the mouth of the Mississippi. Though a good portion of them were little gunboats, most of them were serviceable vessels, and with Commander Porter's bomb flotilla would constitute a formidable array. Our flagship, the *Hartford,* was one of the finest vessels of her class—a screw ship of nineteen hundred and ninety tons register, two hundred and twenty-five feet long, with a complement of twenty-two nine-inch Dahlgren and two twenty-pound Parrot guns, with a Sawyer rifle on the forecastle. She also had howitzers mounted in the fore- and maintops, protected by boiler-iron, this being Farragut's invention and, I believe, the first form of fighting top.

It was the 6th of February when we left Port Royal, and the 11th when we reached Key West, where a number of our vessels were already assembled and a portion of the mortar flotilla, the latter being towed by powerful tugs to our final rendezvous off Ship

Island. I had seen very little of Farragut on the way down. He was suffering from a cold, and there had been no clerical work to do. In fact, my acquaintance was chiefly confined to the engineers' mess, of which I was a member, for the wardroom officers were inclined to avoid a correspondent, fearing, as they afterward confessed, that I would make copy of their every word and act.

But one afternoon Fleet Surgeon J. M. Foltz came to where I was leaning over the rail and said:

"Mr. Osbon, your face is very familiar to me. Were you not in the Argentine navy under Commodore Coe, and did you not command the *Veinte-Cinco de Mayo?*"

I confessed that this was true.

"Well, then," he went on, "don't you remember me as the surgeon of the United States sloop of war *Jamestown?*"

I recalled him immediately, and we reviewed the brisk days at Buenos Ayres of five or six years before. Later in the afternoon a messenger brought word that the Flag Officer desired to see me in his cabin. It was the first time he had summoned me, and I responded without delay.

I found him alone in his cabin, and as I entered he extended his hand in a cordial greeting.

"Mr. Osbon," he said, "I suppose you think I have forgotten that you are my clerk, but as a matter of fact I have not needed to call on you. I understood that you were comfortable, considering the crowded condition of the vessel, and I have not been well, as you know."

I thanked the Flag Officer and assured him that I was perfectly comfortable.

"By the way," he added, "you never told me that you had seen active naval service, and Porter did not mention it in his letter. Now, Dr. Foltz tells me that he knew you in the Argentine Navy, and that you commanded a famous little vessel. You should have told me of this, as I need to know every man's qualifications and experience, especially when it concerns my personal staff. Sit down, please, and tell me all about your naval service. Dr. Foltz has told me a good deal, but I want to hear it from your own lips."

For nearly two hours we talked there in the cabin, and I told him the whole story, beginning with the Anglo-Chinese warfare, and ending with the Port Royal engagement, three months before. I have never had a more attentive or appreciative listener. When I left him that evening he had become more than ever my ideal of a commanding officer.

From that day I breathed a new atmosphere. I was one of the very few men on the vessel who had smelled powder in action, and the wardroom cultivated my acquaintance. I may add that my admiration for Farragut grew with each passing day, and when one day I saw him handle the vessel under canvas my respect for him as a sailor was unbounded. Not long after he said to me,

"Mr. Osbon, I understand you are a signal officer, and as Mr. Watson * has his hands full, I would like

* Lieutenant John Crittenden Watson—at this writing, rear admiral, retired, United States Navy.

you to take charge of the signals as signal officer of the fleet."

No duty could have been more congenial to my tastes or more suited to my position as correspondent. It brought me into the closest touch with the Flag Officer, and gave me the most intimate knowledge of every movement of the fleet. I thankfully accepted the task, and from that day until we were safely at New Orleans, made every signal that controlled the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, as Flag Officer Farragut's command was called.

XXX

With Farragut under Trying Conditions

AFTER filling her coal bunkers at Key West, the *Hartford* crossed over to Havana, where lay the allied fleets of England, France, and Spain, assembled for the purpose of compelling the payment of Mexican obligations, and with the ulterior design on the part of France of placing the Austrian prince, Maximilian, on the Mexican throne. There were also in the harbour a number of Confederate vessels, waiting for a chance to run the blockade, and it was to observe conditions there, and to consult with our Consul General, that we put in at this port.

Owing to the general unfriendliness of the place, our Flag Officer had very little respect for the Spanish authorities and small regard for their customs. It was after dark when we arrived off Morro Castle, and though the regulations of those days did not permit vessels to enter the harbour between sunset and sunrise, we steamed boldly in.

When hailed, "Who are you?" Farragut raised his speaking trumpet to his lips and answered:

"United States flagship *Hartford,* from Key West, bound for Havana Harbour.

"Louder! Louder!" cried the voice, as before, in Spanish.

Farragut again raised his speaking trumpet, but immediately lowered it with an impatient gesture.

"Here, Mr. Osbon," he said, extending the trumpet, "take this. Tell that fellow we are the United States flag ship *Hartford*. Tell him we're from Key West, bound for Havana Harbour, and that we're going in to-night."

"Give her four bells, Captain Wainwright," he added grimly, and this meant full speed ahead.

He told me afterward that if fired on he intended to run in, despite the Spanish guns, to show our contempt for a nation that would shelter an enemy's vessels. Still, he was courteous enough next day, and we burnt a good deal of powder in salutes for the Governor General, and for various Commanders of the allied fleets.

But it was only a formal cordiality, for there was not a ship in that assemblage that would not gladly have sent us to the bottom of the sea, and, what was still worse, there were those other vessels about us flying the Stars and Bars. I wondered how Farragut could remain so calm under such irritating conditions, and respond courteously to compliments so evidently insincere that they were little short of insult.

When at last we were happily at sea again, he turned to Fleet Captain H. H. Bell and drew a long breath.

"Well, thank God!" he said. "I'm more than pleased to be out of that infernal hole. I've been mad clear through all day, and if it were not for the work ahead, nothing would suit me better than to go in

among those fellows and give them a dose of nine-inch shells. We may have to do it yet before this war is over."

We shaped our course now for Ship Island, arriving there on the evening of February 20th, and on the following morning Farragut assumed entire control of the assembled fleets, relieving Flag Officer W. W. McKean, who had previously been in command of the blockading squadron. We had bad weather at Ship Island and were delayed there until the 7th of March. But on the evening of that day the *Hartford* was off Pass l'Outre of the Mississippi delta, and then began the tedious attempt to get the larger vessels over the bar.

Finally, on the 11th of March, we steamed around to Southwest Pass, and on the 13th crossed the bar and anchored of Pilot Town. Next morning Lieutenant (now Rear-Admiral) Albert Kautz, Lieutenant John L. Broome of the Marine Corps, with myself and thirty marines landed and hoisted over the look-out tower the first Union flag planted to stay on the soil of Louisiana. The Confederate pilots had fled up the river, and only a few loyal men and women remained at the place.

On the 15th of March the *Hartford* steamed up to the head of the Passes, where the *Brooklyn* (which had been worked across the bar with great difficulty) and three gunboats were already lying.

Now came nearly a month of tedious delay incident to getting the larger ships over the bar at Southwest Pass. The *Pensacola* and *Mississippi* were dragged over with great effort, the latter cutting through two

feet of soft mud. Finally, on April 8th, Farragut was able to report with great satisfaction that all were over but the *Colorado,* it having been found impossible to lighten this vessel sufficiently to make the passage. This was a great disappointment, for the *Colorado* was a splendid ship, and her commander, Captain Theodorus Bailey, second in rank to Farragut himself, was one of the bravest men and ablest fighters that ever set foot on a man-of-war. Captain Bailey did not abandon the expedition, however, but came up with a number of his crew and eventually was given a place of great honour, as we shall see. Commander Porter's mortar flotilla had arrived safely and the little vessels were moving up in readiness to take their positions. General Butler and his troops were at Ship Island, and matters were rapidly shaping themselves for the first attack upon the forts.

In the meantime I had been given an opportunity to observe something of our enemy's preparations, as well as of their target practice. On March 28th Flag Officer Farragut asked me to accompany Fleet Captain Bell on a reconnaissance of the forts, and with the gunboats *Kennebec* and *Wissahickon* we went up the river to "draw the fire," in order that we might make some estimate of the enemy's armament and resources. Captain Bell and I were on board the *Kennebec,* and I must say that we succeeded in getting the warmest kind of a reception.

Fort Jackson on the left was nearer to us, but Fort St. Philip, on the east shore, being just on the bend, had a clear range down the river. The shots from both fell all around us and we realised that to pass between

those two well armed and ably manned works at a perfectly point-blank range was going to be a task to try men's souls. In 1815 Fort Jackson alone had held the entire British fleet in check for nine days, though they had thrown into it more than one thousand shells. Now, there were two forts instead of one, and each of them far stronger and better armed than the old works.

Just below Fort Jackson there was a barrier in the shape of a chain supported by a log raft and eight schooner hulks, anchored abreast. This, also, must be overcome before our vessels could even attempt a passage, and to sever it would be a work requiring not only skill but bravery, for it would have to be done directly under the fire of both forts. Fort Jackson, being on the lower side of the bend, had a better command of the river above, but the woods just below the fort had been cleared away so that she could sweep downstream, too.

Altogether there was rough work ahead, and when a French and an English gunboat, which had been permitted to go to New Orleans in the interest of their countrymen, came down and reported that it was absolutely impossible for a fleet of wooden vessels to withstand the fire of forts, water-batteries, gunboats, and ironclads that awaited us—that to undertake the passage meant certain annihilation of our fleet—I fear there were one or two wavering hearts among the men who heard the tale. But if so, they made no sign, and as for Farragut he quietly regarded the foreign commanders who so eagerly made this discouraging report, and said very gravely:

"Well, gentlemen, my orders are to pass the forts and capture the city of New Orleans. It is my intention to obey those orders, and with the help of God I have no doubt I shall be able to reach the city. I shall lose some men and possibly some ships, but I do not anticipate a great loss of either. My prayer is they will be few."

His tone was very gentle, but solemn, and made a profound impression on everyone present. It seemed to breathe at once absolute self-reliance, confidence in his commanding officers and crews, knowledge of the weak points of his enemy, an unfaltering faith in a Divine Providence, and a full determination to obey his orders from the Department.*

It was during our reconnaissance of the 28th that I made a sketch of a water-battery which I had observed lying below Fort Jackson. On our return Captain Bell made his report, and later I was summoned for mine. I told the Flag Officer what I had seen and showed my sketches. When he noticed my drawing of the water-battery he at once sent for Captain Bell.

"Mr. Osbon has here a sketch of a water-battery which you failed to report," he said. "How is that?"

Bell was puzzled and a little nettled.

"I believe I have as good eyes as Mr. Osbon," he insisted, "and I saw nothing of the kind."

*"I have now attained what I have been looking for all my life," wrote Farragut in a letter home, "a flag—and having attained it, all that is necessary to complete the scene, is victory. If I die in the attempt, it will only be what every officer has to expect. He who dies in doing his duty to his country, and at peace with his God, has played out the drama of life to the best advantage."

"Well," said Farragut, "we'll take another look to-morrow morning and I'll see what I can see."

We were off next morning at nine o'clock on the *Iroquois,* whose commander, gallant John De Camp, soon put her where we could get a full view of the works. The Flag Officer and Captain Bell seated themselves on the fore yard for observation, and in the shower of iron that dropped around us came very near being struck by a shell from the very water-battery that Captain Bell had failed to see the day before. The *Iroquois* was a bigger target than the *Kennebec,* but once more we came out untouched, though a number of the shots came very close indeed. Nothing disturbed Farragut. He was as calm and placid as an onlooker at a mimic battle. The shell that nearly ended his life was scarcely noticed. He would have remained longer on observation, but for the suggestion from Captain Bell that the situation was needlessly dangerous. No precaution of any sort was taken because of the Flag Officer's presence, except that the vessel did not hoist his blue flag. It was the first time I had seen Farragut under fire. He was my idol as a man, an officer and a hero from that hour.

There came a period now that was hard on the nerves of officers and crew. Commander Porter got his mortar fleet in position, and on April 18 opened fire with his thirteen-inch shells. His vessels were small and made a pretty show as they filed by, for he had their masts and rigging covered with tree branches, so that it was almost impossible for the enemy to see them when they were ranged along the shore. All day and night the air was rent with the deafening roar of

those mortars and the reply of the enemy's guns. Neither side appeared to be able to do much damage, though the Fort Jackson citadel was set on fire the first day and one of the enemy's heavy guns dismounted. On the mortar fleet a man was killed by a shot and later a vessel was sunk, the latter without loss of life. At times the gunboats went up to create a diversion, and their hot fire drove the enemy from the parapets, though this only caused a redoubled fire from the heavy casemate guns. It was rather slow work for the rest of us, lying as we did some three thousand yards below the forts, out of range except for an occasional accelerating shell which dropped here and there, once causing the *Hartford* to shift position.

Yet we were by no means idle. Daily in the cabin of the *Hartford* there was a council of all the commanding officers, where the situation was discussed from every possible point of view, and where every suggestion was carefully considered, and if found worthy was put into effect. Through the inspiration of Engineer Moore of the *Richmond,* our chain-cables were arranged on the outside of the vessels immediately over the engines and boilers, and made an excellent protection. Another idea was to whitewash the decks, so that in the dark—for it had been decided that we would run the forts in the night—rammers and other dark objects could be more easily distinguished. A third plan was to paint the outside of the vessels with a mixture of oil and mud, so they would be harder to see. Still another good idea was to pack the boilers with bags of ashes, clothing, sand and what-

ever was obtainable for the purpose. Many of the ships arranged rope nettings about the bulwarks to protect the men from flying splinters, and there were many such ingenious devices for safety and comfort of officers and crews.

There was also other employment. From the enemy's fleet, which lay above the forts, fire-rafts began to come down—great scows, from fifty to a hundred feet long—loaded with pine knots and well saturated with tar, the whole burning fiercely like a prairie fire and making a rare show in the night on the water. The current was very swift, and it was believed by the enemy that these rafts would get among our vessels and set us afire. But stout crews were kept out in boats, armed with grapplings, and as fast as the rafts came down they were towed ashore and allowed to burn, or were sent drifting down the river below the fleet. Farragut watched this mode of warfare with some disgust.

"If those fellows knew their business they could make it warm for us," he said; "as it is, all they do is to deprive our boys of their rest."

We also were harassed by about two hundred sharpshooters, who ranged up and down the shore to carry information and to pick off our men.

Farragut became impatient on the 20th and declared he would run the forts that night, but repairs to two vessels and the pleadings of Porter for more time with the mortars induced him to wait. On that night, however, an expedition was organised to cut the chain which spanned the river below the forts. The *Itasca* and the *Pinola,* dismasted that they might be less conspic-

uous, undertook this desperate job. Fleet Captain Bell with Commanders Crosby and Calwell, and an expert with petards, had the mission in hand, and with anxious interest we saw them sail away into the darkness. The plan was to blow up one of the supporting hulks with a petard and sever the chain, permitting the rest of the hulks and the raft to swing down against the river banks.

We knew, of course, they would be discovered, the only question being how much they could accomplish before they were sunk or driven away. The moments passed and seemed like hours. Suddenly the whole mortar fleet let loose a tremendous volley, with three to eight shells constantly in the air, falling like meteors in and around Fort Jackson. This was to divert attention from the chain expedition, but it failed to do so. A rocket went up from Fort Jackson, and then both forts opened a fire with heavy guns. Neither of our vessels replied and we had no means of knowing what was taking place. Over an hour of anxiety passed, during which we strained our eyes into the night for the first sight of the returning ships. Then at last a single small boat came out of the darkness. It was from the *Pinola* and brought the news that the chain was broken, and that the *Itasca* was hard and fast aground. The fire from the forts had slackened, but unless we got her off before moonrise she was certain to be captured. Orders were sent to tow her off immediately, even at the sacrifice of her guns. But this was not necessary. By midnight both the *Itasca* and *Pinola* were safe at their anchorage, and while the barrier, which was held in place by anchors, was not

completely destroyed, a passage had been made through it. The petard had failed to work owing to the swiftness of the current, which had broken the connecting wires, so that the cutting had been accomplished by other means. No one had been killed, and we all drew a great breath of relief.

By April 21st, though nearly five thousand shells had been thrown, the forts appeared to be as powerful as ever. It was blowing a fierce norther and the weather was really very cold. Fire-rafts kept annoying us, and every day the enemy's gunboats came down to have a look at us or to land provisions and ammunition at Fort Jackson. On the night of the 21st a bright light in the vicinity of the chain, which we first took for a fire-raft, proved to be a party of the enemy trying to repair the broken barrier. On the same day the *Oneida,* while engaging Fort Jackson, lost almost an entire gun's crew by one shell.

All of these things wore on Farragut's small store of patience, and I could see that he was getting restless. By the morning of the 22d, when the bombardment had continued four days and nights, our Flag Officer could no longer control his expression of its uselessness.

"We are wasting ammunition," he said to Commander Porter, "and time. We will fool around down here until we have nothing left to fight with. I'm ready to run those forts now, to-night."

But Porter still pleaded for time.

"Wait one more day, Flag Officer," he said, "and I will cripple them so you can pass up with little or no loss of life."

This was a strong appeal to Farragut's tender nature.

"All right, David," he replied. "Go at 'em again and we'll see what happens by to-morrow."

But to-morrow brought no change. Fort Jackson was as lively as ever, and Fort St. Philip, which had not been made a point of special attack, was almost untouched. Commander Porter came on board the *Hartford* to report, downcast but still anxious to continue the bombardment. The discussion waxed pretty warm, and finally Farragut said:

"Look here, David, we'll demonstrate the practical value of mortar work. Mr. Osbon," he added, turning to me, "get two small flags, a white one and a red one, and go to the mizzen topmasthead and watch where the mortar shells fall. If inside the fort, wave the red flag. If outside, wave the white one." Then to Porter, "You recommended Mr. Osbon to me, so you will have confidence in his count. Now go aboard your vessel, select a tallyman, and when all is ready, Mr. Osbon will wave his flags and the count will begin."

The little flags were quickly made ready, the tallyman was selected, and the mortar flotilla presently opened up with renewed vigour. Up there at the masthead where I could see, it kept me busy waving the little flags, and I had to watch very closely not to make mistakes. On the deck, 'way aft, Farragut sat, watching the waving flags and occasionally asking for the score. The roar became perfectly deafening, and the ship trembled like an aspen. Still I kept the flags going, while every man in the fleet was watching and

trying to keep count. At last I was ordered from aloft and the tally sheet was footed up, showing that the "outs" had it, by a large majority.

"There, David," said Farragut when Commander Porter came aboard, "there's the score. I guess we'll go up the river to-night."

I remember that day as if it were yesterday. Every detail of the order of advance was gone over for the last time. As originally planned the ships were to advance double-column abreast, with Farragut at the head of one column and Captain Bailey, on the *Oneida,* to lead the other. But Captain Lee, of the *Oneida,* had asked that he might be allowed to command his own vessel, and Commander Harrison, of the little gunboat *Cayuga,* had immediately asked Bailey to hoist his flag on that vessel. It was further decided that, as the opening in the barrier would not safely let a double column pass through, especially in the dark, the vessels should advance single file, and Captain Bailey, with Commander Harrison in the little *Cayuga,* was assigned the post of honour at the head of the column. Farragut himself selected the second division, and Fleet Captain Bell was to lead the third. In all, there were to be seventeen vessels in this great naval parade, and the order of march and action had been gone over and over until every man knew his place in the line, just what was expected of him, and what he was to do under all conditions. In closing his orders for that great undertaking Farragut said:

I wish you to understand that the day is at hand when you will be called upon to meet the enemy in the worst

form for our profession. You must be prepared to execute those duties to which you have been so long trained without having the opportunity of practising. . . . Hot and cold shot will, no doubt, be dealt freely to us, and there must be stout hearts and quick hands to extinguish the one and to stop the holes of the other.

There were plenty of stout hearts and quick hands in that fleet, but on one or two of the vessels there were some sad hearts, also. There were men among them with families at home, and though they were willing enough to go into that terrible gateway, they were convinced that the shot intended for them had been cast.

"Mr. Osbon," said Farragut that afternoon, pointing to a vessel that lay near us, "I hear that they are as blue as indigo in that wardroom over there. Go over and cheer them up. Tell them some stories of the fights you've been in and come out of alive. It will stir their blood and do them good."

I obeyed orders, and it may be I did no good; but I think the boys enjoyed the stories and certainly the vessel made as good a record as any in the fleet. Yet Farragut himself was not without his misgivings as to our probable losses.

"What do you estimate our casualties will be, Mr. Osbon?" he said, near evening, as we stood on the quarter-deck.

"Flag Officer," I said, "I have been thinking of that, and I believe we will lose a hundred."

That was a small percentage considering that we had four thousand in the fleet, and he looked at me

with a good deal of surprise. "No more than that?" he said. "How do you calculate on so small a number?"

"Well," I answered, "most of us are pretty low in the water, and, being near, the enemy will shoot high. Then, too, we will be moving and it will be dark, with dense smoke. Another thing, gunners ashore are never as accurate as gunners aboard a vessel. I believe a hundred men will cover our loss."

He looked at me steadily a moment, and then, a little sadly, said,

"I wish I could think so. I wish I could be as sure of it as you are."

He took a few turns up and down the deck, while I looked up at the sky to see what were the prospects for the eventful night. As I did so, I noticed a great bird—a bald eagle it proved—circling above the fleet.

"Look there, Flag Officer," I called, pointing upward. "That is our national emblem. It is a sign of victory."

He came and stood beside me and we watched it for some time together. Somewhat later—it was just before sunset—a Confederate steamer came down and took a good look at us across the broken chain. As soon as she was gone we began to form in line of battle.

We were already stripped for action, and each man knew his position. Vessels dropped into place and the different divisions formed, ready to swing into line at the given hour and signal.

As the sun slipped below the horizon men watched

it with the thought of what we would pass through before it again appeared. Ahead of us lay two powerful forts, mounting some two hundred pieces of artillery—a chain barrier in which there was but a narrow opening—a lot of dangerous hulks—a dozen or more Confederate gunboats, well armed—one or more rams—fire-rafts without number—a swift opposing current and a desperate foe. Certainly there were those among us who would never see the sun again in the world; and orders were given and ships took their appointed anchorage without much bustle or display.

XXXI

The Passing of the Forts

AT the usual hour the crews turned in, but I think there was little sleep. The men were cheerful and determined, but wakeful. Most of them had been green hands when we started, and scarcely one of them had been under fire. With a night attack just ahead it was but natural that they should be anxious.

At about eleven o'clock the *Itasca* went up to see if the opening made in the chain was still unobstructed, and a little later signalled that the way was clear. Over on the river bank the mortars were pounding away, the bright globes circling in the air. With us all was quiet except for the hiss of escaping steam. It was a pleasant night—clear and no longer cold. The moon would rise at three o'clock. We were to start an hour earlier.

At one, precisely, all hands were called, hammocks stowed, and everything made ready to weigh anchors at two. It was a solemn time. Men went about their duties, thinking of many things. The hour seemed but a few moments. On the stroke of two, with my own hands I hoisted to the mizzen peak a pair of red lanterns, which was the signal to get under way.

Now, this is the order and manner of the fighting that night below New Orleans, April 24, 1862: The

little *Cayuga,* with Captain Theodorus Bailey and Commander Napoleon B. Harrison, headed the first division, with orders to receive, but not to return, the fire of Fort Jackson.

"I will attend to Fort Jackson," Farragut had said, "you fellows make straight for St. Philip, and give it to them as you go by."

Behind the *Cayuga* was to follow the sloop of war *Pensacola,* with Captain Morris, who was always a deliberate man and sometimes annoyed Farragut with his delays. And the old frigate *Mississippi* was to follow the *Pensacola,* with Melancthon Smith in command, and a young executive named George Dewey on her spar deck; while behind the *Mississippi* was ranged Commander Lee with the *Oneida,* another sloop of war. Then came the *Varuna,* a converted merchantman, which with Commander Boggs was to make a glorious record on this her last day, and behind the *Varuna,* the *Katahdin,* the *Kineo,* and the *Wissahickon,* all little gunboats like the *Cayuga,* with officers Preble, Ransom and Smith in command.

Farragut himself chose to lead the second division, which was made up of our flagship, the *Hartford,* with Commander Wainwright, and of the *Brooklyn* with Commander Craven, and the *Richmond* with Commander Alden—our three finest vessels—all sloops of war and the pride of the fleet.

The third division was assigned to Fleet Captain Bell, who hoisted his flag on the little *Sciota,* commanded by Lieutenant Donaldson, while the *Iroquois* with John De Camp, came next, and the *Kennebec* with Johnnie Russell, and the *Pinola* with Lieutenant

Crosby, and the *Itasca,* with Caldwell, and the *Winona* with Nichols, all little gunboats, small and noisy, like the tail of a rattler, trailing out behind.

Seventeen there were of us altogether when I hoisted the two red lanterns, and almost immediately the *Cayuga* had her anchors up and was away into the darkness. It seemed that she had scarcely gone—she was just at the chain, in fact—when a blaze of light and a roar from Fort Jackson told that she had been discovered and, according to orders, was receiving, though not returning, their fire. Then a second roar told that St. Philip had opened, and then at last we recognised the *Cayuga's* eleven-inch forward gun in reply, and knew she had so far lived, and that the fiery passage of the forts had begun at last.

The *Pensacola,* meantime, always deliberate, had been slow getting her anchors, and the *Varuna* with Boggs, and the *Oneida* with Lee, and the old frigate *Mississippi* with Melancthon Smith, and with young George Dewey on the spar deck, had pushed in ahead; and the *Katahdin,* and the *Kineo,* and the *Wissahickon* all eager for battle had followed, until presently the river before us had become a sheet of sulphurous flame, while smoke, thick and black, came drifting about us and stirred fiercely our fighting blood as only the smell of burning powder can.

Still the *Pensacola* fumbled with her tangled anchors, and our Flag Officer, who had been thus far calm and cheerful, responding "All right," or "Thank you, sir," as I reported the sailing of each vessel, now began to chafe at the delay to our division.

"Damn that fellow! I don't believe he wants to

start!" he exclaimed at last, but just then old slow-going Morris did get his anchors and steered away into the black drift ahead. Then a little later we heard the *Pensacola's* big broadside guns roar, and roar, and keep roaring, with a regularity and deliberation which convinced us that Morris, as usual, was taking his time, and perhaps preferred to be at the end of his division, so that he need not be hurried in his fighting and could pass leisurely along the fiery way.

But it was now our turn to move, and without further delay we pushed into the black folds ahead, through which the flash and thunder came back incessantly. It was just half-past-three, and meantime the moon had risen. Such light as came from it aided very little in that dense battle smoke. Carefully we felt our way through the opening in the chain, and then all at once the enemy's guns had found us, too, and solid shot was screaming overhead and fiery shells were bursting around us. At that moment, as by inspiration, I hoisted our largest Star Spangled Banner at the peak, and hastening forward decked the fore and mainmasts each in the same way.

"Why do you do that?" called Farragut, for it was unusual to have the colours flying at night.

"Flag Officer," I shouted back, "I thought if we are to go down, it would look well to have our colours flying above the water!"

"All right," he returned, and presently behind us the *Brooklyn* and the *Richmond,* and the others had seen our flags above the smoke, and had their colours flying, too.

A little way ahead the old *Pensacola* had calmly

stopped her engines abreast of St. Philip, and slowly and with great precision was letting go broadside after broadside, as if upon her alone rested the sole responsibility of demolishing that fort. We could not see her, but we knew her guns, and her deliberate method of firing.

We were now at the very teeth of destruction, but as yet had not fired a shot. It was our orders to waste no ammunition. Farragut had ascended to the port mizzen rigging, where he could see above the smoke and watch all that transpired. With his feet on the ratlines and his back against the shrouds, he stood there as cool and undisturbed as if leaning against a mantel in his own home. All of Porter's mortars were going, and the crash and roar of the guns just ahead was something tremendous, but he seemed to heed it not at all. Twice he sent me to see that all the gun divisions were ready; then he called:

"Go forward and see if the bow guns will bear."

A moment later I had returned with the information that we could reach them with one gun.

"Tell Captain Wainwright to begin firing," he said quietly, and a shot from the bow gun began our share of the battle. "Load and fire at will," was the next order, and immediately after we were "attending to Fort Jackson," according to promise.

It had taken us just twenty-five minutes against that heavy current to arrive at a position opposite the fort, and we were now given their fiercest fire. To sink the flagship would be a great achievement, even if they were conquered in the end. Behind those Confederate guns were brave men, and they did their best.

Shot, shell, grape, and canister filled the air with deadly missiles. It was like the breaking up of the universe, with the moon and all the stars bursting in our midst. As for seeing what the other vessels were doing, or what was going on about us, that was impossible. In that blinding smoke, and night, with everything flying in all directions, the only thing we could see was the flash of guns in our faces and the havoc on our own ship.* Ropes were swinging, splinters were flying. I dimly remember that once the *Brooklyn* swung in too near us and her jibboom carried away my "harp of a thousand strings" as the Flag Officer had called it—an arrangement of signal halyards in which I took great pride. I remember that I used violent language when I saw it go, and shook my fist at our gallant but clumsy consort through the flash and gloom.

At first the enemy's aim had been high, but now they lowered it until their fire began to cut us through. Suddenly a rifle shell pierced the mainmast about on a line with where Farragut stood in the mizzen rigging. Without further delay I hurried up to him and begged him to come down, but he refused to do so.

"We can't afford to lose you, Flag Officer," I said. "They'll get you, up here, sure."

I had a pair of small opera glasses and I had lent them to him, for they were handier than his large binoculars.

* "Such a fire I imagine the world has rarely seen," says Farragut in his report. ". . . It was as if the artillery of heaven were playing upon the earth."

"Flag Officer," I insisted, "they'll break my opera glasses, if you stay up here."

He held them out to me quite seriously.

"Oh, damn the glasses!" I said, "it's you we want. Come down!"

He did so presently, and he had barely left his place when a shell exploded there and cut away a lot of rigging, just where he had stood.

Steadily we steamed on, and at ten minutes past four were just between the forts, where the action became still more general, and terrible. Less than three-quarters of a mile apart—from both forts at once, and from water-batteries above and below—thicker and faster came shot and shell, while we sent back grape, canister and shrapnel, sweeping their parapets of gunners again and again.

And throughout this mêlée and carnage the business of navigating the vessel went steadily on. The sonorous cry of the leadsmen and the deep-voiced orders of Captain Wainwright to the man at the helm came as calmly through the roar of guns and riot of flame as if we were threading the uncertain channel on a night of peace.

"Quarter-less-five—Half-five—Quarter-less-four—"

The leadsmen's intonations came steadily through the smoke and crash, and then, deeply, from Captain Wainright,

"Starboard—" and the vessel would slip over into safer water. That men never before under fire should maintain the calm presence of mind displayed on that occasion I count simply amazing.

It is quite out of the question to give any idea of the

fierceness of the fire at this time, or of the night picture we made there in the midst of flame and smoke and iron hail.

A shell burst on our deck, the concussion stunning Lieutenant George Heisler of our marine corps. I ran forward to see what damage had been done, when the wind of another shell carried away my cap. For some reason it made me wildly furious. I swung my arms and vented futile rage into the battle smoke at the men over there behind the guns.

We were struck now on all sides. A shell entered our starboard beam, cut our cable, wrecked our armory and exploded at the main hatch, killing one man instantly, and wounding several others. Another entered the muzzle of a gun, breaking the lip and killing the sponger who was in the act of "ramming home." A third entered the boatswain's room, destroying everything in its path and, exploding, killed a coloured servant who was passing powder.

Death and destruction seemed everywhere. Men's faces were covered with powder-black and daubed with blood. They had become like a lot of demons in a wild inferno, working fiercely at the business of death. Suddenly out of the gloom ahead appeared a Confederate steamer, her deck loaded with troops, who opened on us with a volley of musketry. There was no time to be lost. Our howitzers instantly replied, and Lieutenant John Broome of the marine corps trained two nine-inch guns on her and let go. We saw the shells strike. Then followed an explosion, horrified yells, a sudden careen, and the waters of the Mississippi had covered her and all on board.

We now realised that Bailey's division was fiercely engaged with the enemy's gunboats just ahead, sinking and burning them—for, one after another, blazing Confederate craft came drifting down the tide, among them a huge fire-raft, attended by the ram *Manassas,* which was pushing and butting it toward the *Hartford.*

It was 4.15 by the watch lashed to my sleeve, where I kept my notes—it being my double duty as Flag Officer's clerk and as correspondent to record the progress of the battle—and we were just abreast of Fort St. Philip, close up—our howitzers in the tops sweeping the parapets, our broadsides pounding at her big guns, when at this critical moment, with the fort on one hand and the fire-raft on the other, we went aground.

This was indeed a crisis. The ram, seeing our predicament, promptly shoved the blazing raft under our port quarter, and in an instant our rigging and the side of our vessel had caught fire. Another fire at this moment was started by a shell exploding in a locker filled with ditty-boxes * down on the berth deck, and for a time it seemed that our end had come. There was prompt action at the hose, but I realised that something had to be done with the fire-raft instantly. Some twenty-pound rifle shells were lying handy, and I rolled three of them to the waterways just above the blazing scow. It was fiercely hot there, and I threw a heavy coat over my head, and, leaning down, began uncapping the shells. I had two of them ready when Farragut came over to see what I was at. As I was covered with the coat, he could only see that I was

* A receptacle where sailors keep trinkets, needle, thread, etc.

upon my knees, and he may have remembered that my father was a minister, for he said:

"Come, Mr. Osbon, this is no time for prayer!"

I got the cap off of the third shell just then, but I paused long enough to say,

"Flag Officer, if you'll wait a second you'll get the quickest answer to prayer ever you heard of," and I rolled the three shells into the burning raft. Almost instantly they exploded with a great noise, tearing a wide hole in the fire-raft and giving the little ironclad such a scare that she backed off with her sinking charge, delivering a parting shot from her single gun.* The hose was at work by this time and our own flames were quickly extinguished; also the fire from St. Philip had slackened somewhat, for our smudge-faced gunners and those of vessels pushing by us had kept up an unceasing and overwhelming fire.†

It was a full twenty minutes that we lay there

*This shot embedded itself in our rudder post, and is now preserved in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

†The late Admiral Boggs used to delight in relating a story told him by Farragut, called "Osbon's Prayer." Farragut seeing an officer kneeling by the poop-plank shear shouted out, "Come, sir, this is no time for prayer!" The officer addressed was B. S. Osbon, Farragut's signal clerk, who, seeing the great peril the ship was in, put an overcoat that lay in the signal locker over his head to prevent the flames from burning him, and rolled three twenty-pound rifle shells up under the curling flames, deftly uncapped them, and just as Farragut chided him for his prayers at such a time, threw them over the side into the fire-raft, and in five seconds they had exploded, tearing out the sides of the raft. After the explosion of the shells water rushed into the raft and she sank.—From "Records and Battles of Admiral George Dewey," by M. F. Tobin, Commander of the Associated Veterans of Farragut's Fleet.

abreast of St. Philip. Then our engineers got us off, and, still followed by the fire of the forts, we pushed on toward the battle with the fleet, which we could hear going on just above. But Bailey's division had attended to the matter well. The battle was nearly over. Everywhere Confederate vessels were sinking —burning holes in the night. On both shores and in the stream they lay. We knew that wonderful fighting had been going on up there, but we could scarcely believe our eyes. Of a fleet of eighteen, including rams and a powerful ironclad, the *Louisiana,* but three or four had survived, and these were disabled or retreating—falling out of the fight. The plucky little ram *Manassas* was still afloat, and made one more attempt to damage the Union fleet, ramming here and there as best she could, though now with little result.

"Signal the *Mississippi* to sink that damn thing," commanded Farragut, and a minute later the old craft—with young George Dewey, executive, still on the spar deck—was after her, and coming alongside plunged an entire broadside through her armour. Sinking rapidly, the ram made for the shore, where thirty men ran out of her gun port and escaped to the woods. Another volley or two was poured into her, and she drifted down between the forts, sinking lower and lower in the water. That ended the great battle of the 24th of April. We had met the enemy "in the worst form for our profession," and still at our mastheads—shot through and ribboned, but radiant with sunrise and victory—our colours bannered to the morning sky.

XXXII

The March of the Victors

ALL our vessels but three had passed above the forts. The brave little *Itasca* early in the fight had received a shot through her boiler which made it impossible for her to proceed; the *Winona* and the *Kennebec* had become entangled in the chain-hulks and had been unable to extricate themselves before daylight, when it would have been almost certain destruction to attempt the passage. The *Winona,* in fact, lost almost an entire gun's crew in making the effort, and the *Kennebec* prudently withdrew.* Of the vessels that had passed the forts, every one had been pierced through and through, and one, the *Varuna,* Commander Boggs, had been struck by two rams and sunk, though not before she had destroyed or driven ashore three vessels, and had kept her guns going until the carriages were covered with water, disabling one of her assailants and destroying the other—five to her credit in all. Then she was run ashore, and her crew, including the wounded, saved.

I should like to recount here the exploits of every

* The vessels which were unable to pass attached themselves to Commodore Porter's fleet below the forts, which, besides the mortar flotilla, consisted of the *Harriet Lane, Westfield, Owasco, Clifton,* and *Miami,* and the *Portsmouth,* towed by the *Jackson.* This division lay on the west bank, just below Fort Jackson, and enfiladed the works with a hot fire.

vessel in our noble fleet, but I can find room for only a few. The *Cayuga,* which bore the flag of Theodorus Bailey, and led the way, must come first of these:

She made no reply to the guns of Fort Jackson, but held her fire until close up with St. Philip, when she let go with grape and canister, still steering on. The little gunboat was struck from stem to stern. Shot after shot went through her, though without reaching a vital spot or checking her progress. Then all at once, just above St. Philip, she was surrounded by the "Montgomery Flotilla"—the enemy's fleet, consisting of sixteen gunboats, many of them with iron prows, the ram *Manassas,* and the floating iron battery *Louisiana,* of twenty guns. It was an anxious moment, for no supporting vessel was in sight. Yet the little *Cayuga* did not hesitate. The forts had been found impregnable. Here, at least, was something that would sink. "This," says Bailey in his report, "was *hot* but more congenial work."

Three large steamers attempted to board him—number one on the starboard bow—number two astern—number three on the starboard beam. That was as many as could get around him, and the fire was pouring in. But just here the *Cayuga's* eleven-inch Dahlgren went off in the direction of number three at a point-blank range of thirty yards.

The effect was something tremendous. "He immediately steered in shore," says Bailey, "ran aground and burnt himself up." The forecastle gun settled the enemy in that quarter, the remaining vessel being now so close that the *Cayuga's* crew prepared to repel boarders. It did not come to this. The guns did the

work, and before the remainder of the Confederate flotilla could close on the *Cayuga,* Boggs with the swift, ill-fated *Varuna* and Lee with the *Oneida* came dashing up, and with the *Cayuga* quickly made a finish of eleven of the enemy's fleet, sinking and burning them in all directions. Then the *Cayuga* discovered a Confederate camp on the right shore, and steering in close, shouted to the colonel to pile up his arms on the river bank and come aboard, which he promptly did. The *Cayuga* had forty-two holes through her, when all was over, and six wounded men—but not a man was killed.*

Though the *Pensacola* did not take her appointed place in the line of battle, I will add another word of her movements here. Always deliberate, she made not the least haste either in her firing or her progress. Here and there abreast of the forts, where it was hottest, she stopped her engines and poured in carefully aimed broadsides, which probably did more damage than those of any other vessel in the fleet. Once she was struck by the ram *Manassas,* which, however,

* Commander N. B. Harrison, of the *Cayuga,* gives it to us in a nut-shell. "At 2 A. M., in obedience to the Flag Officer's signal, weighed anchor, led the column toward the barrier, and stood up stream, close to Fort St. Philip. At 2.45 both forts opened their fire. At 2.50 opened on Fort St. Philip with grape and canister. At 3 passed the line of fire of Fort St. Philip, and encountered some eleven gunboats, no supporting ships in sight. At 3.25 one steamer surrendered, and two more were driven on shore. At this moment discovered the *Varuna* and *Oneida* dash gallantly into the fight. At 5 anchored in front of Camp Lovell and received the submission of Colonel Szymanski and his command."

Here, in the space of a little more than a hundred words, we have material for as many historical novels.

sheered off without doing serious hurt—receiving a destructive broadside as it passed. When the *Pensacola* concluded that she had done her duty, thoroughly and professionally, so far as the forts were concerned, she went up into the naval fight and took off part of the crew from the sinking *Varuna.* The unhurried progress of the *Pensacola* made her a target for the enemy's fire. She had many shot holes and a total of thirty-seven killed and wounded—more than any other vessel of the fleet.

The *Brooklyn* came next in the list of casualties. Her place was behind the *Hartford,* but in the darkness and blinding smoke she lost sight of us and became entangled in the chain-hulks. When she was finally rid of these she lost herself once more in the dense clouds which we left behind us, and coming upon us suddenly, carried away my signal halyards. Meantime she had been raked by Fort Jackson, had sunk a venturesome Confederate steamer, and now, blinded by the fire-raft and butted by the ram, came blundering over toward St. Philip, where in thirteen feet of water she engaged and temporarily silenced that fort. She got out at last, only to be attacked by other steamers, into which she poured death-dealing broadsides. Her progress had been eccentric but effective, and her killed and wounded totalled thirty-five men.

I should like to speak of more of the vessels—of the *Oneida,* which ran in so close to St. Philip that she was below the angle of the enemy's guns, of the *Iroquois,* which made a gallant record, arriving above the forts in time to sink a number of the enemy's fleet,

of the old frigate *Mississippi,* whose course was directed by the man who was one day to conquer at Manila—of the sloop of war *Richmond;* of the *Katahdin,* the *Kineo,* and the *Wissahickon;* of the *Sciota,* and the *Pinola*—that small and noisy division that, like the tail of a rattler, yet stinging and savage like the cracker of a whip, came trailing out behind. All the vessels did brave work—all were struck and torn, nearly all lost men.

It was five o'clock when we came to anchor off Quarantine above the forts.

"Make the signal to report casualties, Mr. Osbon," said the Flag Officer, and one by one as the vessels collected they sent up their flags in reply. Throughout the battle Farragut's one anxiety had seemed to be for the safety of his men. Now and then, when I reported to him how few had fallen on our own vessel he had said fervently, "Thank God!" When he had seen the *Varuna* sinking, his first exclamation was, "I pray that Boggs and his people are safe!" He stood by me now, as the reports came in, anxiously watching the figures I set down. When they were many, as in the case of the *Brooklyn* and *Pensacola,* he sighed deeply. When they were few he breathed thanks. When the list was made up and a total of twenty-four killed and eighty-six wounded were reported he uttered a fervent exclamation of gratitude.* I had underestimated by ten men. His chief concern now was for the *Winona,* the *Itasca,* and the *Kennebec,* of

* The total Union loss, killed and wounded, in all the actions below New Orleans eventually footed up about one hundred and eighty. The Confederate loss was many times that number.

whose fate we knew nothing. Our fear was that they had been sunk, and Farragut immediately dispatched Captain Boggs with one of the gunboats through the Quarantine Bayou to learn what was possible of the missing vessels, as well as to report our success to Commander Porter,* also to notify General Butler that the way was now clear for him to bring up troops through the bayou, as the enemy had nothing left but the forts, and these—their supplies cut off and of no service to their cause—must speedily surrender. They did so, in fact, to Commander Porter, next day.

We lay off Quarantine all day on the 24th, resting. Yet it was a busy day. Commanding officers came aboard the flagship to exchange congratulations, and to pay tribute to the brave, capable man who had made the great victory possible. He received them in the most quiet, modest manner, saying to each that it was his officers and men who had won the battle. To us in that moment he seemed the greatest hero of the ages. If permitted, we would have cheered him all day long. That evening we steamed up to the English Turn, not far below New Orleans, and halted there to give the men a night's rest, for, according to report, there were yet two more strong works—the Chalmette Batteries—to pass. I slept on deck that night, to receive or send any emergency signals, and on the only occasion I had need to report to Farragut, found him sleeping as quietly as a babe.

* In his letter to Commander Porter, Farragut said:
"We had a rough time of it, as Boggs will tell you, but, thank God, the number of killed and wounded was very small considering. . . . You supported us most nobly."

Early on the morning of the 25th we had our anchors up and were away, but once more the little wasp of a *Cayuga* was on ahead, and, before we could get within a mile of her, was lying bow and stern across the batteries, they raking her, she giving it to them with her eleven-inch and Parrott guns. I have never seen a more daring thing than that little gunboat lying there alone in broad daylight, engaging two forts. Fifteen minutes later we were beside her, but it was not immediately that we could bring our guns to bear. Gradually we worked around until our port broadside could be used, and, taking careful aim, let it go altogether, permanently closing the incident so far as the battery on that bank was concerned. The *Pensacola,* the *Brooklyn,* and the little *Sciota* meantime had come up, and had promptly attended to the works on the east shore. On both sides the batteries were being deserted—men running in all directions. Two on horseback attracted my attention. They were within easy range, and in the excitement of the moment I picked up a rifle and drew a bead on the forward man. Then, just in time, I remembered what such an action would be, and dropped the gun. Nearly forty years later, at a meeting of veterans of both sides in New York City, I told this incident, and a man ran up and grabbed me by the hand.

"My God!" he said, "I was the front man on that horse! You saved my life."

There was no further interference with our progress toward New Orleans, and we went up as in a parade of triumph. On either side of the river were fine plantations, and some of these were owned by loyal people.

Now that they could safely do so, they had the Stars and Stripes floating from their beautiful old mansions, and returned our cheers and wavings. Even where we were regarded with scorn by men and women collected on the front verandas to see us pass, there would be a group of negroes in the rear, making silent but joyous gesticulations of welcome. Below the Chalmette Batteries, when we were close in shore, a very old darkey with a carpet bag and an umbrella had followed along the levee, shouting praises to the Yankee fleet and to his Maker, until suddenly the guns of the *Cayuga* opened, when with a wild whoop he disappeared as if hit by a shell. I thought Farragut would laugh himself sick.

We were now greeted with dense smoke and burning craft of every description. The mob at New Orleans, in anticipation of our arrival, were destroying whatever fire would consume. Steamers loaded with cotton, blazing and smoking, went drifting by, and vessels of every kind. Large ships had been fired and cut adrift to float down upon us, and as a heavy shower had now begun, the smoke became dense, almost blinding. Then we were abreast the city, and I hope I may never live to see another such destruction of property, such a wild, indiscriminate burning, such a futile and useless outburst of invective and denunciation as greeted our eyes and ears when we came to anchor off New Orleans—when the men and women of that city looked across incendiary flames and smoke of their burning stores at the red, white and blue of the Star Spangled Banner once more floating on the breeze. Their fury was beyond bounds. A little party

on shore who waved a white flag and cheered for the Union, was assaulted and several persons killed.*

On the twenty-sixth I accompanied a force up the river to Carrollton, where there were two forts of reported strength, but panic had gone before us. We found the guns deserted and spiked and the gun carriages in flames. On the same day the city formally surrendered, and the American flag had been hoisted over the custom house.

You will . . . proceed up the Mississippi River, and reduce the defences which guard the approaches to New Orleans, when you will appear off that city and take possession of it under the guns of your squadron, and hoist the American flag therein, keeping possession until troops can be sent you.

These had been Farragut's orders. He had obeyed them to the letter.

* In Farragut's reports he says: "I have never witnessed such vandalism in my life as the destruction of property. . . . Ships, steamers, cotton, coal, were all in one common blaze."

XXXIII

Bearing the News Northward

IT was decided that Captain Theodorus Bailey, with Commander Boggs (now without a ship) should be the bearer of despatches to Washington, and I was permitted by Flag Officer Farragut to accompany them. The little *Cayuga* was selected for the trip, and we sailed April 29th. As I left the *Hartford* to go aboard the *Cayuga,* the sailors of the flagship manned the rigging and gave me three cheers.* It was a beautiful and unexpected tribute of good-bye, and this, with the Flag Officer's mention,† has been always my most precious reward for services which were performed with no idea of compensation, and, indeed, were no more than would gladly have been rendered by every man on that noble ship. There was no monopoly on courage in that fleet. Every man had it and had looked into the fiery face of death without a

* At 3 P. M. Mr. Osbon, flag-lieutenant (signal officer), left the ship to go on board the *Cayuga;* as he was leaving, gave him three cheers.—"Cruise of the U. S. flag-ship *Hartford,*" by William C. Holton, ship's yeoman.

† "And those who were around me—the signal officer, my clerk, Mr. Osbo(r)n, Messrs. Bache and Wardell, captain's clerks, and Master's Mate Allen, who had charge of the twenty-pounder gun (an apprentice boy), all did their duty well," etc.—Report No. 88, Flag Officer Farragut to Secretary Welles.

tremor. If my shipmates had an impulse to cheer me, I suspect that it was more for the reason that I had entertained them somewhat and made myself useful among them during the days below the forts, than for anything I may have achieved during the hot and spectacular passage which followed.

It was three o'clock when I went aboard the *Cayuga,* and a little later we set off down the river, followed by the cheers of the entire fleet.

General Butler was at the Quarantine station at this time, and it was our orders to notify him that we were going North, and to stop long enough for him to prepare any letters he might wish to send. It was night when we arrived off the hospital buildings, and I was sent ashore to notify Butler, and to wait for the letters.

The boat pulled alongside the wharf and I walked toward the buildings, surprised at not being challenged. In a room on the right hand sat two or three officers, who were considerably surprised at seeing a stranger in naval uniform appear suddenly in their midst. They rose hastily, but before they could speak I stated my name and errand. Then one of them merely waved toward the end of the hall.

"You will find the General in that room," he said.

Whatever General Butler's discipline may have been later, at New Orleans, it certainly was lax enough here. I went to the end of the hall, opened the door, and there, stretched on a hospital cot, was a fat man, sleeping noisily. On a chair at his side was a bottle bearing the legend "S. T. 1860. X.," and in

the neck a flaring tallow candle, burned almost down to the glass. The sleeper was only partly covered. His head was encased in a red nightcap. I spoke to him, but he did not hear me. Then I called in a loud voice, "General Butler!"

He turned over, fixed that peculiar eye of his on me and said: "Well, who are you?"

"Mr. Osbon," I said, "from the *Hartford*. The *Cayuga* is here, going North with despatches. Flag Officer Farragut presents compliments, and has asked me to say that if you have a few letters to write we will wait and carry them North for you."

The General was on his feet in an instant—a picture worthy of canvas. A moment later and the building was in an uproar. He was shouting for clerks and aides, and they came rushing in. He commanded his aides to give out the word that there was an opportunity to write letters. Then with three or four of his clerks seated at different tables he began dictating his own correspondence, walking from one to the other, keeping all the different letters going at once, in a way which to me seemed marvellous. He was in a continuous circle of correspondence, as it were, and how he could keep up the continuity of the various letters, I cannot understand to this day. Ludicrous as he looked, I acquired more respect for him that night than I had known on any previous occasion. At the end of an hour I had an armful of letters, and we proceeded on our way down the river, past the now friendly forts—the way between starlit and peaceful, where all so recently had been flame and battle smoke —down through the passes, and out to sea.

That was a memorable trip, on the *Cayuga*. No better or more companionable men than Captains Bailey * and Boggs ever lived, and our passage was a continual round of reminiscence and pleasant recreation.

Of course our talk was chiefly of recent events, but, as I remember it now, there was much less reference to recent dangers and deeds of valour than to the humorous incidents of the fight, or at least to what now appeared proper food for mirth. Perhaps what amused us most was an incident which had occurred to the coloured boy of the *Cayuga*. He had been passing powder when a spent grapeshot had struck a casting near him and shattered, half of it striking him

* Such was my admiration for Captain Theodorus Bailey, that somewhat later I made application for service under his command, receiving the following reply:

57 E. 23d St., New York City.

Dear Sir:—In answer to your letter, it affords me pleasure to testify to the fact that you served with Flag Officer Farragut in the flagship *Hartford* as volunteer clerk and signal officer during the expedition and battles in the river ending in the capture of New Orleans. And Flag Officer Farragut told me he found you one of the most useful persons on board, intelligent, and full of resources. A passage home was granted you in the gunboat *Cayuga*.

Your courage, deportment, and efficiency in the *Hartford* were highly and generally appreciated from the fact that I saw them give you three cheers on leaving (all the ships manned the rigging and cheered you as you passed by them). In case I am ordered in command of a squadron it would afford me pleasure to have you join me as secretary, volunteer aide, or in any staff capacity that the regulations or usages of the service will allow.

Respectfully your obedient servant,

Theodorus Bailey, *Captain, U. S. N.*

To Mr. B. S. Osborn, New York.

plump in the forehead. I suppose his frontal bone was thick there, for the piece of shot had dropped to the deck without doing any special injury beyond a bruise, and the plucky coloured boy had paused long enough to pick up the missile and pocket it for future reference. When the fight had ended, and different ones of the crew had recounted their various accidents and escapes, the little fellow (he was not more than fourteen) stepped up and pulled the half grapeshot from his pocket.

"Look heah," he said proudly, "dat shot done hit me on he haid an' broke in two. Dere's de shot and dere's de place it hit me. You can see foh you'se'f."

It was Boggs's greatest joy now to call this lad and to have him repeat the story, which the young hero did with delight, several times a day.

It was the 8th of May when we arrived off Fortress Monroe, just in time, as it happened, to witness another naval battle, though of a feeble sort, compared with what we had seen. Yorktown had been occupied by McClellan a few days before, and with Fortress Monroe already ours, conditions were ripe for the fall of Norfolk. President Lincoln and Secretary Stanton had come down from Washington to witness the spectacle. Commodore Goldsborough's fleet—wherein was the *Monitor,* which had already demonstrated her superiority over the *Merrimac,* and a number of other fine vessels, including several improvised rams—was expected to make short work of the Confederate squadron.

Learning of Mr. Lincoln's presence, we sought out the tug from which he was watching the proceedings,

and went aboard. The fleet was then in full play, and we stood ready with the *Cayuga* to enter the fight, if invited. But President Lincoln was more eager to hear the news from New Orleans than that we should add to our laurels. He made us tell the story of the great fight in detail, meantime keeping his eye on the movements of the fleet under Goldsborough, which though fighting with discretion was evidently getting the best of the battle.

All at once I saw a signal made from the *Minnesota,* the flagship, to withdraw from action, and this at the very moment when we all thought that our rams should have improved their opportunity and destroyed the *Merrimac,* still the terror of the fleet. Naturally my blood began to boil, and I freely expressed my opinion of Goldsborough's fighting.

"How can you tell what is going to happen?" asked Mr. Lincoln.

"Because," I said, "I am a signal officer, and can read flags," and taking a signal book from the officer of the tug, I showed him just what was going on, and did not hesitate to add that if Farragut were only in Hampton Roads the victory would be ours in thirty minutes. Bailey and Boggs fully agreed with me, and Mr. Lincoln looked puzzled and distressed. It was evident to all of us that the Confederates were on the run, and that the *Merrimac* even then was limping away. That Goldsborough did not press his advantage home disgusted those of us who had so recently seen fighting of another sort, and that the President remonstrated with him that night is shown by the Commodore's letter of explanation, in which he says: "I

supposed I was carrying out your wishes in substance, if not to the letter." *

Bailey and Boggs as well as myself had now lost interest in the operations at Norfolk, and we were all very anxious to get home, Bailey with his despatches and I with the story of the fight below New Orleans, which as yet had not reached the North save in brief fragments, chiefly from Southern sources. We therefore asked Mr. Lincoln if there was any reason why the mail boat, held by orders of Secretary Stanton, should not proceed to Baltimore.

The President declared that so far as he knew there was no reason for further delay, and directed me to tell Mr. Stanton that he desired the boat should proceed with the important despatches carried by Captains Bailey and Boggs.

* Many comparisons were drawn between the operations of the fleets at Norfolk and at New Orleans. The New York *Times* correspondent, May 7th, 1862, said:

"The whole army and navy is paralysed by the *Merrimac.* Commodore Goldsborough of this station will not stir a vessel or move a gun in any direction so long as the *Merrimac* threatens this part of the coast. The spectacle presented here is pitiable. We have here the *Monitor,* which has already shown herself a match for the *Merrimac,* the *Naugatuck* and *Galena,* both ironclads, the *Vanderbilt, Arrago,* and *Illinois,* all prepared for the express purpose of running her down, besides two guns mounted on shore throwing balls and shells weighing over four hundred pounds, and both commanding at point-blank range the channel through which the *Merrimac* must pass to enter York River, and the entire armament of Fortress Monroe; and yet, with all this force, the naval authorities here do not dare look the *Merrimac* in the face, but act as if the end of the world had come if she but show her nose off Crainey Island."

Norfolk surrendered to the combined land forces May 10th. Perhaps Commodore Goldsborough's policy of delay was inspired by the wish to avoid possible losses of men and vessels.

I went up into the Fort, found Mr. Stanton lying on the lounge, saluted him, and delivered Mr. Lincoln's message, asking if the mailboat might be allowed to proceed to Baltimore. Mr. Stanton raised himself on his elbow and regarded me sternly.

"No, sir," he said. "You will tell Mr. Lincoln that the mailboat will go to Baltimore when I say she'll go."

I returned to the tug and reported Secretary Stanton's exact words. The President regarded me mildly, but with a curious look in his eye.

"Where is the captain of the boat?" he asked.

"There," I replied, pointing to a man on the dock.

"You may tell him to come here," said Mr. Lincoln, and not many minutes later the captain of the mailboat stood before the President, who was likewise Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States.

"Are you ready to proceed to Baltimore?" Mr. Lincoln asked.

The captain said he was, that his mails were ready to be put on board.

"Very well. Get your passengers together, put your mails on board and proceed to Baltimore at once. These gentlemen are just from New Orleans, with official reports of the glorious fight, and we are very anxious to get them to Washington."

The captain at once obeyed, got his mails and passengers aboard, cast off lines and we were away. But as we rounded the face of the Fortress there came a puff of smoke and the report of a blank cartridge, a signal to stop. I was in the pilot-house with the captain, and when the gun was fired he said:

"Look here, that means we must turn around and go back."

"Captain," I said, "the orders from the President of the United States, who is also the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, were to proceed at once to Baltimore, and I'm a witness to see that you go."

The words were hardly out of my mouth when—boom! It was a shotted gun this time, the ball passing across our bows.

Once more the captain hesitated. This was getting serious.

"Captain," I said, "Farragut obeyed orders and went to New Orleans in the face of hundreds of such guns as that. Don't you let them scare you!"

There were no more shots fired. We proceeded to Baltimore without further trouble and I was in New York next day. On the 10th my story of the operations below New Orleans occupied nearly three pages of solid matter in the *Herald*, and was the only account written by a man who had actually passed the forts. On May 24th my sketches occupied three pages of *Harper's Weekly*.

XXXIV

I Carry News of the Seven Days' Battle

IT may have been due to the excitement and stress of those days below New Orleans—to climatic conditions, or to the food and water—I cannot say, but from whatever cause, I fell ill with a gastric fever shortly after my return from the South, and was unable to resume my post with Flag Officer Farragut, much as I desired to do so. For a time I was unfit for work of any kind, and when I recovered I confined myself to office duties, with an occasional trip to Hampton Roads, or to some other point near the front of action.

While the Seven Days' fight was in progress—June 25th to July 1st, 1862—I was at Fortress Monroe, in charge of a sort of bureau for our correspondents in the field, looking after their supplies, receiving their despatches, forwarding as best I could the story of the battle, for which all the country was so eagerly waiting. But when the last day's struggle ended at Malvern Hill, and the tale of death and bloodshed was complete, the War Department forbade us free use of the wires; so, with a number of correspondents for other Northern journals, I determined to come to New York at once, bringing the copy in person. We embarked on the Baltimore mailboat, which had a large

number of Confederate prisoners on the way to Fort McHenry.

There was not much sleep on the boat that night, and when we arrived at Baltimore all made a rush for the New York train. There was only one in those days and we all made it, but it was a discouragingly slow affair, for the road was crowded with troops going to the front and there were many delays. At last about dusk, when we were still several miles out of Philadelphia, a blinding rainstorm set in and slowed us down still more. Then, as a final disaster, we collided with a cow, which derailed the engine in a lonely place and upset things generally.

Some of the correspondents now held a council of war and decided that it was no use to make any further effort to get through that night, and that it was advisable to get a much needed rest. I did not join this council, but quietly taking my gripsack containing the despatches, I set off in the direction of a light I had seen shining brightly in a window about half a mile away.

Reaching the house I knocked, and was presently relating to the family my story of our railway accident, adding that there were very urgent reasons why I should reach New York without further delay. I of course made no mention of the fact that I was a correspondent, or that there were others in a similar plight.

A beat was a beat in those days and their opportunities had been the same as mine. I did put in something about a deathbed and a mother anxiously waiting, all of which was true, many times over, for

my despatches carried the tale of many thousand deathbeds, while anxious mothers in every corner of the land were waiting for the latest word and for the long, long list of names. Even if the thought of another great news victory was uppermost in my mind, I think my argument was justified. I ended by offering the man of the house five dollars to hitch up and drive me to West Philadelphia.

But it was a bad night—terrible, in fact—and the man of the house did not want to go. The wife pleaded with him in behalf of the anxious mother, and I added another five dollars to the temptation. A few minutes later we were beating our way through the tempest behind a fairly swift team. It was a wild, wet experience, but we were at last in West Philadelphia, where I hurried to railroad headquarters. I found that no train was to be had that night, but that I could procure a special engine for a hundred and fifty dollars. I knew that Mr. Hudson would at this hour be at his desk in the *Herald* office, and I soon made it known to him by wire that I had all the other correspondents corralled in a wreck, and that if he thought it worth while I would charter the engine and come on.

Frederick Hudson never hesitated in a matter like that. Word came back to close the bargain, and within half an hour after I had reached Philadelphia I was on the way to New York, this time going at headlong speed through the night and rain. I remember that night as a weird race with time. Lights and stations flashed by. Here and there we had to pause briefly for trains to pass, chafing impatiently as we

waited, though for the most part they gave us an open track.

At Jersey City were two carriages from the *Herald,* four men in one and three in the other. I handed out my great bundle of copy, and it was cut into "takes" on the way across the ferry, and presently we were going at a gallop up Cortland Street to the corner of Fulton and Nassau, where the *Herald* building then stood.

It was near midnight when we reached the office. A gang of extra compositors had the matter instantly in hand, everything made way for the big story, and the most of it was on the street by daylight in the hands of eager thousands. But to the marooned correspondents, it must have made rather a discomfiting story when they met it in the *Herald* on their arrival in Philadelphia that morning. Well, those were the days of great opportunities and many beats. The vast network of wires and the perfected system of the Associated Press have made great individual news achievements, to-day, few and far between.

As a sequel, or rather a pendant to this episode, I may recall an incident with a certain gruesome humour in it, which occurred upon my return to Fortress Monroe, a few days later. I had with me many copies of the *Herald* with the lists of killed and wounded—fairly correct, considering the manner of compilation—and in the hospitals, where the thousands of wounded lay, the papers were seized with pathetic eagerness, every man anxious to see that his name was there. On one cot that I passed lay a man terribly wounded, his face already whitening with ap-

proaching death. He told me his name, and I found it for him in the long list. He wanted to see it, and I pointed it out and held the paper in range of his eyes. He regarded it steadily for an instant, and then a tragic look which I shall never forget came into his face as he gasped out,

"My God—after fighting—and dying—for your country—then to have your name—spelled wrong!"

XXXV

I Join a Unique Naval Expedition

THE victory of the little *Monitor* over the *Merrimac*—March 9th, 1862—had marked the beginning of an epoch in the construction of naval fighting machines. Our beautiful old wooden vessels—the splendid frigates, the handsome sloops of war and the swift, effective gunboats—began to be regarded with compassion and distrust, while the revolving turret of Theodore R. Timby, as combined by John Ericsson with a low-lying, ironclad hull —the "cheesebox on a raft"—became all at once the centre of naval attention throughout the civilised world.

That the "monitor" type of craft, as against other vessels, whether of wood or iron, was a potential agent of destruction, was certain. Whether such a vessel would stand the plunging fire of a land battery with heavy guns—whether her crew could endure the shock and strain of such a pounding, even supposing that the vessel could survive, these were questions much discussed and to be settled only by actual experiment. The test came, when in January, 1863, the monitor *Montauk* was sent against Fort McAllister, Georgia, in which historic demonstration it became my fortune to take an active part—to convey, as it were, the verdict which spelled the final doom of our beloved

"wooden walls" and destroyed forever the romance of naval warfare.

After the test at Hampton Roads a number of the Ericsson vessels had been rapidly completed, and I had made one trial trip on the *Passaic,* which had resulted in a rather unsatisfactory test of her guns. I knew Ericsson well, intimately, in fact, and in the double capacity of seaman and reporter had frequently discussed his plans with him, offering here and there a suggestion, which was occasionally adopted. Still, I must confess I was far from enthusiastic concerning the new idea, and my brief experience in the *Passaic* did not cause me to fill with joy at the thought of being canned up in a box like that, during heavy action.

I may add that my sentiments were shared by naval officers and men generally. The *Monitor* herself had not found it easy to get a crew, while of the available officers only stout-hearted John L. Worden had been willing to take command. His prompt victory over the *Merrimac* had made him the hero of the hour, though the fact that his head, or more particularly his eyes, had been injured by concussion was discouraging to volunteers for such service, and when the *Montauk* was ready for sea it was once more Lieutenant-Commander Worden who, despite his infirmities resulting from the former experience, nobly accepted the command.

The *Montauk* was put into commission at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in December, 1862, and, whatever may have been my misgivings, I lost no time in applying to Commander Worden for the position of clerk and

signal officer, and was duly appointed to fill the place. The little fighter left New York the day before Christmas, under convoy, touching at Hampton Roads, arriving at Port Royal, where Rear Admiral Dupont made his headquarters, coming to anchor, January 19th, off Hilton Head, the scene of that rare naval spectacle of more than a year before. I did not make the trip South in the *Montauk,* for the reason that a Russian admiral had obtained permission to make the passage and there was no other spare berth in the vessel. I came down by the naval transport *Circassian,* arriving a day later, and January 20th, 1863, precisely a year from the day of my first meeting with Farragut, I reported to Rear Admiral Dupont, and received from him special instructions concerning my duties on the *Montauk.* When I was leaving he said,

"Mr. Osbon, you are aware that Commander Worden's eyesight is defective owing to injuries received on board the *Monitor.* I shall expect you to be his eyes, and as his clerk to aid him in every possible way. The *Montauk* will be tested under heavy fire from earthworks, and we desire full information as to results, for it is our purpose to use this type of vessel in reducing the defences of Charleston. Keep your eyes open and note all events, and the details of the working of ship and guns."

I promised that I would faithfully set down every item that came under my personal observation. Then, the Russian admiral having vacated my premises, I reported to Commander Worden, aboard the *Montauk.*

The destination of the expedition headed by the *Montauk* was the Ogeechee River, one of the several

inlets just below Savannah, and our object was two-fold. As already shown, we were to test the new type of vessel under the fire of Fort McAllister, a heavy land battery located several miles up the Ogeechee; but the chief purpose of our venture was to destroy or capture the steamer *Nashville,* which, since that day off Charleston Bar when from the *Harriet Lane* we had sent across her bows the first shot of the war from the Union side, had become a Confederate blockade runner and commerce destroyer—in fact, a privateer. On November 19th she had captured and burned the ship *Harvey Birch,* and in February had burned the schooner *Robert Gilfillan.* Later, she had wormed her way through the blockade into the Ogeechee, and now lay under the protection of the powerful guns of Fort McAllister, loaded with cotton and stores, waiting for a dark night, or a dense fog, to slip by the blockaders, and put to sea. Our wooden vessels could not hope to stand the fire of Fort McAllister nor expect to pass the network of piles, mines, and torpedoes which made a deadly barrier just below the works. It would have been wildly reckless, even had there been a possibility of success, to attempt, as at New Orleans, a passage of the fort, for the reason that only the *Nashville* lay beyond—game most important, but worth no such risk, and of no value to the enemy so long as she remained hemmed in. The *Montauk,* with her great eleven and fifteen-inch guns, was expected to silence the earthworks, to destroy the obstructions, and to capture or sink the pirate. We shall see how far these hopes were realised.

XXXVI

The First Encounter of Monitor and Fort

IT was Saturday, January 24th, 1863, when we finally entered the mouth of the Ogeechee and came to anchor off Raccoon Island. During the voyage down I had made a careful inspection of the workings of the vessel, her guns and interior arrangements, and while my confidence in her fighting qualities, and in her ability to stand punishment momentarily increased, I was not favourably impressed with her provisions for the comfort of officers and crew. We were all so very close together and so near to various forms of death. Below the surface of the water, shut up in a metal box, with every sort of explosive packed about us, with no air except what came down through the turret—little enough even when distributed by steam fans—with no handy way to get out if something should suddenly go off, or a valve should let in the ocean, or the steam fans should fail to work, certainly this was unlike any navigation or warfare I had known.

Our executive officer, Cushman, was a mathematician. In fact, I have never seen such a fiend for figures. He must have carried off all the prizes at Annapolis, and he now carefully worked out for our edification the exact lung capacity of every man below decks, and to the fraction of a minute just how long each of us

would last if the supply of oxygen suddenly ceased. He further demonstrated with startling accuracy precisely how many seconds it would take the vessel to fill with water coming through a hole of a given size, and at a given pressure, according to the depth below the water line. Furthermore, he showed how this hole could be made, calculating with deadly skill the foot-pound energy of shot of every known diameter, with the precise indentation or perforation of an iron plate of any given angle or tensile strength. Cushman's figures were satisfactory, but not comforting. They fascinated for a while, but eventually they lost him friends. We fell away from him when he produced his pencil and paper. Some of us took refuge in the turret or in the little pilot-house which surmounted it. Others risked their lives by going on deck. Anything was better than those figures.

On the day after our arrival we took a position higher up the river, off Marsh Island, just out of range of the enemy's guns. Our fleet now consisted of four vessels besides the *Montauk*. We had with us two old friends from the Mississippi, the gunboat *Wissahickon* and the mortar schooner *C. P. Williams;* also the gunboat *Dawn,* commanded by "Johnnie" Barnes, a fine officer and a loyal friend, and the *Seneca,* drawn from the squadron at Port Royal. All were stripped for action, and the *Montauk's* decks, except for the turret with the little pilot-house atop, and the smokestack, were entirely clear. On the night of the 25th Commander Davis of the *Wissahickon* went quietly up into the enemy's lines, shifted a number of range marks and destroyed a lookout pole. On the

26th the *Daffodil,* the despatch boat from Port Royal, joined our fleet.

We had by this time looked over the field pretty carefully and knew about what work lay ahead. Fort McAllister, named for the commander, a wealthy planter who lived close by, was a huge earthwork on a sharp bend of the river, and a little way beyond—loaded and ready to put to sea—the *Nashville* lay. Just below the fort, stretching across the river, with somewhere an egress for the *Nashville,* were the obstructions. The *Montauk* was to go up ahead and silence the fort. Then the gunboats would come up and we would proceed to clear the obstructions. Passing above, the capture of the *Nashville*—a rich prize, loaded as she was with cotton—would be easy. The plan was very simple, you see, with but one defect. We failed to estimate the power and durability of that fort.

On the afternoon of the 26th the commanders of the gunboats came aboard the *Montauk* for a final council of war, and at five o'clock on the morning of the 27th we prepared to engage the enemy.

It was a dull morning and too early for anybody to feel hungry. Besides, most of the *Montauk's* crew had never been under fire—while no man living had ever taken the fire of a shore battery in a craft of that kind, and the new experience just ahead was not calculated to improve a man's appetite. Yet as a whole, we had faith in our craft and we knew that the eyes of the world were upon us. I think Worden had no doubt of the result, and the crew generally were cheerful and eager to get at the fighting. We might have

been a trifle less confident had we known the strength and skill of our enemy.

We started up the river at five minutes of seven, and by seven were going fast, the *Seneca, Dawn, Wissahickon,* and *C. P. Williams* following about a mile and a half astern. It was ebb tide and we steamed up grandly. All at once we passed a clump of trees, and the fort was in plain view. With Commander Worden in the pilot-house, was Pilot Murphy, a quartermaster to steer, and myself—close quarters for four men. Perhaps I ought to say that the pilot-house of a monitor was the embryo conning tower of to-day. It was solidly constructed of six plates of one-inch laminated iron and had slits for observation. Worden and I each had one of these peep holes. It was my duty not only to record the battle, but to give him ranges, and information which, owing to his defective vision, he could not compass with certainty. In fact, as Rear Admiral Dupont had said, I was to become "his eyes."

No sign of life appeared in the fort as we approached —not even a flag. A small tug lay a little way above the obstructions, a thread of smoke coming from her stack, showing that she was ready to move. Evidently she had the torpedo wires and was waiting to fire them if we got in position. We steamed slower now—still not a soul to be seen on the works, which we began to think might be deserted.

At 7.30 we were within fifteen hundred yards of the fort, and let go anchor. Five minutes later, at the word of command, the turret beneath us began slowly to revolve. A few moments and the big eleven-inch gun was at range, elevated for fifteen hundred yards.

"Stop!" and the turret came to a standstill. "Fire!" and for an instant one's heart stood still, waiting. Then the floor of the pilot-house lifted and heaved and shook with the mighty roar of the gun a few inches beneath, and a moment later a great shell exploded just short of the enemy's works.

I had never before stood on top of, or rather over, an eleven-inch gun when it was being fired, and the sensation was novel, to say the least. Then suddenly the fifteen-inch monster, which the boys had named "Heenan" (the other was called "Sayres"), went off, and the explosion of the world could hardly have been more startling. We knew now what to expect, and after that raised on our tiptoes at the word "Fire."

But just here we discovered that the fortress was not abandoned. At 7.40 precisely there came a flash from up there and a well-aimed ten-inch shot struck us on the gunwale, raising a ruffled edge on one of the plates, but doing no damage. The hit made a great noise below, but its slight effect established confidence among the crew.

We now loaded and fired as fast as possible, but did not at once get the ranges, owing to the new sort of gun practice. The wooden vessels, meantime, from some distance in the rear were piling in shell on the fort in excellent style, and the battle was on in earnest. It was to us, almost entirely, that the fort devoted its attention. Above and about us shells exploded, rattling against our armour, making an infernal racket, but doing little or no harm. The smoke got very thick about the pilot-house, blowing in at the peep holes, and annoying Worden so that presently he went

below to inspect the working of the turret and to note the effect of the heavy guns upon the vessel, leaving me to communicate the ranges and length of time fuses to Mr. Cushman in the turret below. Once as I was about to call to him through the grating, a heavy shot from the fort struck the turret a terrible blow, making such a noise as I think none of us had ever heard before in our lives.

"Hey, Cushman," I called, "can you calculate the foot-pound energy of that shot?"

He did not reply to the question, but the boys below told me afterward that when he recovered his equilibrium he instinctively reached for his pencil and paper.

We now realised that we had underestimated our enemy. Our ammunition was running low, and while we had pounded the works severely and made a good deal of sand fly, we had apparently done little harm. Shot and shell came as thickly as ever, fired with unerring accuracy. For once my rule of gunnery on land and sea was being proven by the exception. At 10.35 we swung into better position, but it was no use. We could accomplish little without more ammunition, and at noon, when our last shells were nearly gone, we weighed anchor and dropped down the stream, followed by farewell volleys, among which a thirty-two pounder hit the turret fairly. An hour later we were at our anchorage, counting our scars. We had fifteen hits, altogether. The gunboats were untouched.

On the whole, everybody was very happy. We had accomplished little in the way of damage to the enemy, but we had enjoyed a forenoon of fine target

practice, and, more than all, we had demonstrated the fact that the Ericsson monitor would stand the heavy fire of land batteries. We had perfect faith now in our iron vessel. She worked like a charm, and she had come through a fearful pounding, all the better for it, we said, for now her plates were more securely hammered on. In fact we were in high spirits, cracking jokes and laughing at the curious spectacle we made with our powder-blackened faces, and were so rejoiced to be once more in the fresh air that I think we hardly realised how fully we had revolutionised the navies of the world.

XXXVII

Another Trial at Fort McAllister

FIVE days elapsed before we were ready for a second attack. The *Daffodil* went to and fro between Marsh Island and Port Royal, bringing down ammunition and necessary supplies. From contrabands we heard various reports, among them a rumour that the Confederate ironclad, *Fingal,* was expected to take part in the next engagement. We gave little attention to such intelligence, and spent most of our time filling the great shells for "Heenan" and "Sayers," those of "Heenan" weighing three hundred and sixty-five pounds each—the solid shot thirty-five pounds more.

Our friends, the enemy, were likewise busy. The little tug was going about all day putting down torpedoes, helping with repairs and assisting the *Nashville,* which had come back down the Seven Mile Reach and lay once more just above the fort. We could see her from the mastheads of the gunboats, and knew that she was still piling on cotton, hoping that by some trickery, or assistance, she would be able to get by us in the dark. It was her greediness for cotton that proved her downfall, as we shall see.

On the 29th a little bird lingered about our decks all day, very tame and friendly, and the sailors thought it a good omen. In the evening we heard a heavy gun

go off from the works, and concluded that the enemy had mounted and was trying a new gun. Later we discovered a bright light near where we had anchored. Evidently we were to have a proper reception this time.

On the next day the Confederates burned off the rice and brush fields back of the fort, doubtless expecting a land attack in that quarter. On the 31st the *Daffodil* came down with a final load of ammunition and two army officers, who were anxious to see the fight. We were ready now for the second attack, our plans being this time to go much nearer to the works, and by rapid, well-directed fire to silence and destroy the battery.

It was 5.30 when all hands were called on the morning of Sunday, February 1st, 1863, and again there was a light breakfast in prospect of, and preparation for, the fight. There was a real Sunday quiet on the river and the land about, and then the old feeling of going into action, as usual, made us a trifle solemn.

It was not that there was any distrust of our vessel this time, though to be sure we were to stand a test at much shorter range, but there is always something peculiar in the sensation a man has going into battle aboard ship. He has usually known of the impending engagement for hours, even days, ahead. The situation has been discussed from every conceivable point of view. Every possibility, even that of defeat, has been considered, and, if possible, certain letters have been written home. Then at last it is the moment of starting. A sharp order is given, and the anchor chains click in the windlass. The crew bus-

tles—a rapid walking goes on about the decks. A bell in the engine room jingles, the vessel moves. There begins a rushing sound of water along her sides. All these are accustomed sounds and movements, but there is always a different note and a special significance in them when the ship is going into battle. Even the lamps below burn with a peculiar glare. A glass of water has a different taste. One finds that he is nervously impatient. Why doesn't the first gun go off and begin it all? Then, suddenly the enemy opens—a shot strikes the vessel, or tears through the rigging. Why don't we fire? Why in hell don't we fire? Click! goes a gunlock—Snap! goes a primer, and there is a tremendous report which shakes the vessel and wakes it to new and sudden life. There is no more hesitation, no more nervousness, no more cold sweat. One suddenly becomes a fierce, eager creature with the energy of a demon. The engagement has begun.

Our battle of February 1st was a repetition of our former action, much intensified. We went up within six hundred yards of the works this time, where we could look directly into the muzzles of the guns. The gunboats lay considerably lower down. At 7.45 we opened with our fifteen-inch gun, and then for four hours there was such a cannonade between fort and fleet as the world had never seen. Their markmanship was something superb and we were hit continually in every quarter. Shells hit the turret and pilot-house, bursting into showers of fragments. Then presently the smoke became so dense that neither side could see, and both slackened fire until the air cleared. Immediately afterward, the fort opened with greater

accuracy than ever, and we were literally peppered with shot and shell. So deafening was the noise of their heavy projectiles at that short, deadly range that I have not recovered my full hearing to this day.

At 8.30 I was down on one knee making a note, when a tremendous blow on the pilot-house loosened some of the plate bolts, one of which struck me on the shoulder, while another displaced my kneecap (the same one I had unshipped in the *Gautemala* several years before) and broke two of my ribs.

I was half stunned and my leg was well-nigh useless, but it was not until we had ceased firing that I made my way below decks for surgical examination. The enemy, however, was not through with me. I was standing in the wardroom, by the surgeon's command, with my head just below the deck, when a shell struck fair and square exactly above me, and over I went. They thought I was done for then, but in a few minutes I regained consciousness, was patched up, and went on with my notes.

I found the noise even louder down there. Shells striking the pilot-house had sounded like the cracking of gigantic nuts. Here, when a shell struck it was more like the cracking of one's skull. Besides, I suppose I wasn't feeling quite well, which made a difference.*

But our boys didn't seem to mind anything. Black

* Frederic Hudson, in his "History of Journalism in the United States," page 716, speaking of the arduous work of *Herald* correspondents in the field and afloat, says: "Osbon, of the same paper, the only correspondent on the ironclads in action, calmly watched the effect of each impact, and . . . as signal officer, in the rigging with Farragut, ran the gauntlet

as demons, they laughed and joked and rolled in the big shells, and sent them with a jeer at the powerful earthworks which we were pounding and smashing, though to little purpose for, with the exception of one gun which we had blown into the air and one man killed by a needless and derisive exposure of himself on the parapet, their armament and force would seem to have suffered not at all. Once more, at noon, with our ammunition exhausted, we were drifting down to our old anchorage, where everybody came aboard to see how we had stood the fight. We were as good as new, despite the fact that we had received forty-eight shots this time—nineteen on the turret and pilot-house, seven in the smokestack, which looked like a pepper box, while two of our flagstaffs had been shot away. We had accomplished nothing at all so far as the *Nashville* was concerned, but we had gained a knowledge of our invulnerability which we accounted as worth millions.

at New Orleans. . . . If the Press had ribbons and orders to confer for gallant conduct on the field of battle, these correspondents would have their breasts covered with brilliants on state occasions; but their decorations shine in the columns of the papers, where they are imperishable."—A. B. P.

XXXVIII

We Get the *Nashville* at Last

WE now became simply a blockading fleet, and for four weeks lay off Marsh Island, waiting for something to turn up. We had about given up the idea of reducing the fort without more heavy guns, and a relay of monitors was expected to take part in the next engagement. Twice during the month I went up to Port Royal with the *Daffodil,* for ammunition, and to carry despatches to Rear Admiral Dupont, who was deeply interested in talking over with me the more minute incidents of the two engagements. Dupont, however, prohibited my forwarding any portion of the story to the *Herald* until the operations on the Ogeechee should be at an end. He explained his reasons to me, which were chiefly that any preliminary report of our experimental work might be of benefit to the enemy as well as ourselves, and he embodied his objections in an official letter to Worden, in which he put a taboo on reporters generally. This, as he explained to me, was done in order that he might show a copy of the letter to the flock of newspaper men who were constantly besieging him for permission to accompany the various expeditions. I was entirely in accord with the admiral's views, and agreed to send nothing to the paper without his approval.

The *Nashville,* meantime, had kept her position,

just above the fort and, though we did not know it, was held there by lower tides and the fact that she was so deeply laden that it made it difficult for her to cross the bar which separated her from the "Seven Mile Reach." She was by no means a welcome guest of the fort. Colonel McAllister, as we learned later, declared that so long as she lay there those "damned Yankees" were likely to come up and annoy them, and it was by his orders that the vessel at length essayed to get back into the "Reach"—an attempt which became her undoing.

At three o'clock on the afternoon of February 27th the *Wissahickon* signalled "Strange sail or steamer up the river," and immediately afterward we saw the dense black smoke of the *Nashville* behind the forest which shut off Fort McAllister from our view. The smoke got blacker, and we saw that the vessel was moving rapidly toward the Reach. Then suddenly she stopped, dead still. We speculated as to the cause, quickly arriving at the conclusion that she was aground. The *Seneca* was immediately sent to reconnoitre, and brought back the joyful news that the *Nashville* was, in truth, hard and fast on the bar, and that she was not likely to get off, having gone on at full speed and at the top of the tide.

We were greatly rejoiced. It was too late to do anything that evening, but we felt confident that our prey would be there next morning, and we prepared for early battle. To capture the *Nashville* would mean the end of our long waiting, and with her cargo of cotton, big prize money was possible. There was anxious watching and little sleep in the vessels that night.

On the morning of February 28th, at four o'clock sharp, we were called, and at 5.20 were under way. We ate little or no breakfast at all, this time. Like a darkey with a new pair of shoes, we were too much excited for breakfast, and a little coffee and hardtack was the most that anybody took.

There was a haze on the river, and we steamed slowly to avoid new obstructions. At 7.05 we let go anchor about twelve hundred yards below the fort, and about the same distance from the *Nashville,* lying across the bend. There, indeed, she lay, hard and fast aground, the hasty unloading and the sturdy labours of the little tug, which had been going on through the night, having failed to relieve her. She was a fair mark and knew that she was doomed, and when we sent toward her now, an envoy of death in the form of a screaming eleven-inch shell, those who had not already deserted her, fled hastily, leaving her to her fate.

The battery on shore replied, but we paid no attention, letting their shells fall where they would. They did not even annoy us now, and when a solid shot hit the pilot-house and broke in two, we scarcely remarked the incident. It was only our prey, the beautiful steamer that two years before I had seen cross the Charleston Bar and fling out the Stars and Stripes at our shot of warning, lying there at last in plain view, that we wanted now. It seems a little sad, to-day, that the beautiful vessel had to go, but we had no p'ty, then.

At first we overshot the mark. I had called the distance at twelve hundred yards, while Cushman, the man of mathematics, had held for fifteen. We had a sharp dispute, which Worden settled by ordering the

first guns trained at an elevation just between our figures. But it was too far, and the distance was gradually shortened down to my figure. Cushman had perfect mathematics, but his judgment of distance was faulty.

At twenty-two minutes after seven we landed a fifteen-inch shell close to the *Nashville,* and five and one-half minutes later we sent another—it was our fifth shot—smashing into her hull, just between the foremast and paddlebox. Almost immediately followed the explosion. Acting Master Pierre Geraud was working both guns finely, considering that from his position in the turret below only the masts and smokestack of the vessel could be seen. We were proud to show the enemy that we had a gunner, too. They gave us up, presently, and directed their fire at the wooden gunboats. Smoke settled about us, and after the eighth shot we ceased firing, to let the air clear. Presently a breath of wind swept the drift aside, and we saw to our great joy a dense column of smoke rising from the forward deck of the stranded vessel. Our exploding shell had set her on fire. A few minutes more, and flames were distinctly visible, forcing their way up, gradually creeping aft until they had reached nearly to the base of the smokestack.

A fog came drifting down on us, threatening to shut out the glorious sight, but it lifted every other moment like a curtain, and it showed us presently, with each uplifting, a wonderful spectacle of leaping flames that shot higher and higher into a smoky canopy above them. The masts and smokestack were standing. Then the guys of the latter loosened—it tottered,

fell, striking the port paddlebox, sending up a great shower of glowing embers that rose and mingled with the blackness above the doomed vessel. The rigging caught and became torches and festoons of fire. At intervals the flames would rush in a body aft and die out forward, as if the destroyer were racing to and fro in the joy of carnival. Nothing but darkness could have added grandeur to the scene.

We fired occasionally, until it became evident that we could not aid materially in the destruction wrought by the flames. At 8.06 we ceased altogether, having fired but fourteen times. We lingered to watch the spectacle, and presently from the shore a mighty white smoke of burning cotton rose to mingle with the darker clouds from the blazing vessel, and thus vanished all hope of prize money, though little we cared in that moment of triumph, with our enemy perishing before us, no more to give us anxious nights, no more to wreck our commerce on the high seas.

We had weighed anchor and were already drifting down the river, when there came from the burning vessel a heavy report, the bursting of a gun, perhaps, and then a little later a terrific explosion, aft, where her magazine lay, and the end had come. Only a few charred fragments remained of the vessel, once lovely in form and of fair and peaceful purpose, to be doomed at last to become a drift of cinders and a heap of tangled wires. In the earliest day of her career I had seen the first shot of warning, and I had seen the last that had sent her to her death. Beautiful craft that she was, she deserved a better fate!

We drifted down the river, now, rejoicing greatly

that our mission was accomplished. Then all at once our enthusiasm received a sudden chill. Just under our hull there was a sound as of a double explosion, and a few minutes later the water rushed in. We had struck a torpedo and sprung a leak.

For a few minutes matters looked pretty serious. Then our pilot put us on a sandbar, we plugged up the hole, pumped out the water and went on, little the worse for the damage. Down the river the gunboats cheered wildly as we passed. When we had reached anchor and had enjoyed a real breakfast, everybody came aboard to congratulate us on having completed our mission, and especially on having withstood the heaviest and most accurate land fire known, receiving in the three engagements seventy-two hits, besides that from the torpedo, yet coming off with no damage worth mentioning. By six o'clock that evening we were again in fighting trim, and when three days later the *Passaic, Patapsco,* and *Nahant,* three more monitors, came down from Port Royal to get their baptism of fire and a day's target practice with Fort McAllister, our boys were aggrieved because we were condemned to be mere spectators on that occasion.

Yet there was a certain comfort in being able to witness a monitor battle without being choked up in a turret or pilot-house, and I think we all enjoyed it. Our decks were covered with men, watching our three sister monitors hammer away to their heart's content. There were plenty of good hits on both sides, but the fine Confederate earthworks remained unsilenced, and our monitors came out of the fight undamaged, having only demonstrated still more thoroughly that the

Ericsson idea was to transform the navies of the world.

We were now through on the Ogeechee, for, with the *Nashville* destroyed, the fort was no longer worth the ammunition and effort it would take to conquer it, and I hurried to Port Royal with the remainder of my story.

To say that Rear Admiral Dupont was gratified at the reports of our destruction of the *Nashville,* conveys a poor idea of his satisfaction. The vessel had been a thorn in his soul for many months. There had been continual rumours that he had allowed her to escape, and to know now with certainty that she had been reduced to ashes and a heap of scrap, at the bottom of the Seven Mile Reach, filled him with supreme joy. He greeted me with the greatest warmth, and when he had finished reading my letter and had made a copy of it in full, for his own use, he returned it to me with permission to use it exactly as written.

"There is your letter," he said, with that courtesy of manner which made all men honour and love him, "it has been of the utmost value to me. And here is an order to Captain Hoey of the *Mary Sanford* for your passage North. You have also my thanks for faithful service." *

* Port Royal, S. C., March 7th, 1863.

Sir:—You will please give passage to B. S. Osbon, formerly attached to the *Montauk* to New York.

Yours respectfully,

S. F. Dupont,

Rear Admiral Commanding South Atlantic Squadron.

To Captain Hoey,

Steamer Mary Sanford.

Commander Worden conveyed his acknowledgments to me, next day, in the form of a letter:

PORT ROYAL, S. C.,
Mar. 8, 1863.

B. S. Osbon.

DEAR SIR: I take great pleasure in acknowledging the useful services rendered me as acting captain's clerk and as signal officer, for which latter service you volunteered, and in which you displayed great courage during the recent operations of this vessel in the Ogeechee River. In the two attacks made upon Fort McAllister on January 27th and February 1st, your services in observing the ranges of the guns and noting events that occurred, which were of great advantage to me, as my defective eyesight rendered my own observation very unsatisfactory.* Wishing you health and prosperity I am,

Yours very truly,
JOHN L. WORDEN,
Commander U. S. N., Commanding Montauk.

Four days later I was in New York City, after passing through a severe storm, and on the next day, March 13th, my *Montauk* story and map appeared in the *Herald,* making a full front and the greater portion of an inside page. As the report of an epoch-making event it was translated into almost every language of Europe and, significantly, into one of Asia—Japanese. It was the final death warrant of our wooden navies. We had loved them well, but the old

*Commander Worden's head was troubling him at this time, to which fact was doubtless due the oversight of failing to mention my participation in the action of February 28th, when the *Nashville* was destroyed.

order had changed. The " wooden walls " tottered, the iron hull with its revolving turret—the " cheese box on a raft "—had battled its way into the world's confidence. Yet to-day, it, too, has passed. The order still changes. From the Ericsson idea have been evolved the great war vessels of to-day, with their mighty guns, their turrets, and their conning towers. Our ships have come back to us, with walls of steel—their pigmy progenitors are no more.

The *Monitor* lies off Cape Hatteras beneath a hundred fathoms of water. The *Montauk* was sold at auction in 1904, and went into the scrap heap. I have always thought the Government should have preserved her. I should have done so myself had I had the means.

XXXIX

Mr. Fox Catches His Game at Last

UPON my return from the Ogeechee I made another brief but profitable venture into the lecture field. I announced that I would give a talk at Niblo's Garden on "Fighting with Iron Vessels," and a large crowd gathered to hear me. Captain Ericsson made me a number of chalk drawings on a blackboard—diagrams and the like—all remarkable for their beauty and detail—various shipbuilders contributed a number of fine models; and I told the story of the battles of the *Montauk,* with a net result of nine hundred dollars for this one lecture.

Nor was this the only lecture I gave that day—the first having been delivered to the smallest audience I ever entertained, and at the highest price of admission. Niblo's Garden was then owned by the great merchant, A. T. Stewart, who with a friend had dropped in during the morning. Noticing the drawings and models, he had asked what they were to illustrate.

I happened to overhear the question, and replied, "They are to be used in my lecture on monitors and their fighting value. Having served in one, I am going to give a talk on the subject. If you will sit down for a moment I will give you some idea of what I intend to say."

Mr. Stewart and his friend sat down willingly

enough, and I spent about twenty minutes in telling them the story of the *Montauk*. When I had finished they thanked me and went away. I called next morning at Mr. Stewart's store to pay for the rent of the hall, the price of which was one hundred dollars. When I had settled this matter with the cashier, I was told that Mr. Stewart desired to see me, and a little later was ushered into his private office. He was very cordial and asked me if I had done well with my lecture—once more thanking me for the entertainment of the day before. He then bade me good-morning, and as I passed out the cashier handed me my receipt for the hall rent and with it a sealed envelope. When I was out on the street I opened the envelope with some curiosity, expecting possibly the price of two tickets, certainly not more, for Mr. Stewart had the name of being somewhat parsimonious. What was my surprise and gratification to find nice new bills to the amount of one hundred dollars. Mr. Stewart had remitted my fine.

I have now arrived at the sequel to the Fort Sumter episode—the unhappy result of having omitted from my report of that expedition, by his own request, the name of Gustavus V. Fox, later Assistant Secretary of the Navy. As we have already seen, the relief expedition had been Fox's idea, and a failure. He had expected public censure on his return, and as a special favour to him I had omitted his name from my news report. When, therefore, the patriotic public rose up and bestowed honour upon the expedition and all connected therewith, the friends of Mr. Fox naturally inquired why he had received no mention in my article.

He declared that he could not explain my motive, whereupon I promptly stated the facts in full, with the result that Fox became very bitter, using his influence as Assistant Secretary to oppose and handicap me in my work, even seeking to discredit me with Secretary Welles. Eventually his opportunity to punish me came. It happened in this wise:

Frederic Hudson retired from the management of the *Herald,* and during the latter part of 1864 I, also, resigned my position on that paper to establish a bureau of naval intelligence, from which I sent news to various journals, both in New York City and elsewhere, this being one of the first news syndicates—the very first, so far as I know. Being in touch with the officers in the various squadrons, news came to me freely—commanders sometimes sending advance news, with the request that it should not be used until officially reported by the Government. It was late in December, 1864, when the combined attack by land and sea was to be made on Fort Fisher, North Carolina, and several days in advance Admiral Porter forwarded me his final order of battle, from which I had prepared a carefully written preliminary story of the operations. This, manifolded, had been sent out to fifteen or twenty papers, with the express understanding that it was not to be published until news of the actual attack had been received. Every paper stood by the agreement but one. A rumour of an attack was circulated, and one journal in its desire to be "prompt" did not wait for verification, but printed my matter in full.

This was Mr. Fox's opportunity. Technically I had

violated the Fifty-ninth Article of War, and by the assistant secretary's orders I was arrested, charged with having given intelligence to the enemy. On the first day of January, 1865—two weeks before the battle really took place—I was taken into custody at my office in New York City, and without being allowed to communicate with any of my friends, was hurried to Washington and confined in the old Capitol Prison, where many a better man than I suffered long and ignominious imprisonment to satisfy the pique of some public official.

It was three months from the day of my imprisonment before I saw daylight again. Then, one rainy morning, I was escorted by two soldiers to the headquarters of the Military Commission, where I refused to plead to the charge of furnishing the enemy with information, suggesting that they shoot me first and try me afterward, as had been done in the case of two of my predecessors. I was taken back to my cell, and Senator Charles Sumner, whom I had never met, interested himself in my case, with the result that, though I still remained in limbo, the Military Commission was abolished.

Meantime my father came to Washington and visited me in prison, asking me immediately if I was guilty.

I replied that I had done no intentional wrong, that, whatever else I might be, I was not a traitor to my country.

My father then went up to the White House and told my story to Mr. Lincoln, who listened attentively, and said:

"Doctor, your son is not a traitor. I know him well—he *couldn't* be. My advice is to have him stand trial, by all means. If they do manage to convict him, which I don't believe they will, I will see that he is not shot."

My father came back with the news that Mr. Lincoln had agreed to stand by me, which was most comforting, for months of confinement in a wretched cell take the cheer out of the strongest heart.

A few days later I was called downstairs and told to pack my belongings. There being no longer a Military Court in Washington, I was to be taken to New York for trial. Arriving in that city, I was conducted first to General Dix's headquarters in Bleecker Street, thence to Ludlow Street Jail, where I was made comparatively comfortable and treated with unusual consideration, for the story of my unjust arrest and incarceration had been exhaustively published in the New York papers. General Dix, always a good friend, had given orders that I was to be brought to see him whenever I wished to come, and I visited him often. Then one morning my trial by court-martial began, and for several days I was a figure of national interest —the papers everywhere commenting freely on what they declared was an unjustifiable proceeding on the part of public officials—one paper, the *Tribune,* asserting that it had cost the Government sixty thousand dollars to try an innocent man. The farce closed at last, with a verdict of acquittal—a fortunate one for me, for, during the days of my trial, that great and noble man who had promised to stand by me—Abraham Lincoln, the man whom of all others I shall most

revere to my dying day—was shot down, and his body taken through New York City without my being able to pay any small tribute to his sacred dust.

When everything was over, and I was a free man once more, an old shipbuilder whom I had known for many years called me to his office one day and handed me a package.

"This is a little testimonial," he said, "from your friends in this city. Take it and go into the country and recuperate."

The package contained five thousand dollars in cash.

XL

I Become a Part of the Mexican Problem

I HAVE already briefly referred to the allied fleets of England, France, and Spain which in February, 1862, were lying in Havana Harbour, their purpose being to compel payment of the very large sums due from the Mexican Republic, with the ulterior motive of usurpation, on the part of France. It is true that England and Spain withdrew from the alliance when the French scheme became evident, but not before they had given force and character to the expedition, which was precisely as the wily French sovereign had planned.

Like his great uncle, Napoleon III. was ambitious of conquest. He saw in Mexico a vast empire over which he would exercise suzerainty, and so command a key position in the Western World. With the Mexican Republic in so chaotic a state as it was in the early sixties, and with the United States in no position to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, the French ruler without much difficulty bore down upon the disordered Government of Benito Juarez, and in 1864 established the so-called Mexican Empire—seating a ruler of his own selection, Ferdinand Joseph Maximilian of Austria, on the throne.

The story of Prince Maximilian and his beautiful wife, Carlotta of Belgium, is one of the saddest in all

history. They were ideally wed and lived in perfect happiness in one of the most beautiful of European castles, Miramar, on the Adriatic, near Trieste. Maximilian had been admiral of the Austrian Navy and governor of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom, filling each office with great honour, beloved by those about him. He was not averse to official duties, yet preferred literary and philanthropic pursuits, and the Princess Carlotta was in full sympathy with his every aim and enterprise. It was to Miramar that the commissioners of Napoleon came to invite Maximilian to accept the throne of Mexico, urging upon him the plea that he was the one man to lift up and regenerate a fallen people. More than all else, Maximilian loved the distinction of being regarded as a benefactor, an ambition shared by his princess, who, furthermore, was perhaps dazzled a little by the pleasing prospect of a crown. The Austrian prince agreed that he would accept the proffered throne if the people of Mexico themselves wanted him, and means were found to assure him that such was the fact. It was in May, 1864, that he entered into his empire, assuming the title of Maximilian I.

His triumph was short lived. Though vanquished and disorganised, a very large element of the Mexican people were still loyal to Benito Juarez, and from the very beginning Maximilian had to battle for his throne. Furthermore, he was steadfastly ignored by the Government of the United States, while Napoleon, who had counted on the South as his chief ally, began to realise with each succeeding Northern victory that the tenure of empire in Mexico was becoming an un-

certain and precarious thing. The future was obscure and portentous for the new ruler and his lovely empress, and each day added a darker cloud.

Finally, in 1866, affairs in Mexico reached a crisis. Our own war was ended, and with a vast host of veterans and a splendid army and navy, we were in a position to make and enforce demands. True to the Monroe Doctrine, the United States suggested to Napoleon, diplomatically but forcibly, that French interference in Mexico was an affront to American institutions, no longer to be countenanced—in a word, that his troops must be withdrawn. Napoleon was further given to understand in no uncertain terms that the United States would, if necessary, coöperate with the supporters of Juarez, the Liberals, in their efforts to overthrow French and Austrian dominion on Mexican soil.

The French Emperor was in no position to resist. Though by various evasions seeking to defer the final day, he did not fail to realise that the end of his Mexican empire was at hand, and he urged Maximilian to abdicate. This the latter refused to do. He was no fair weather ruler. Brave, unselfish, and still deluded, he believed in the full justice of his cause, and that the uplifting, and final salvation, of Mexico depended on his courage and the maintenance of a paternal, though imperial, power.

It was just at this point that I became, in some measure at least, a part of the Mexican problem. After several months of rest, succeeding the trying days of my enforced retirement, I had once more established my news bureau, with almost the entire support of the

New York City press. The *Tribune,* the *Times,* the *Sun,* and others gave me their patronage. Horace Greeley was particularly forceful in his denunciation of my accusers, and I can see him now as he turned from writing at his high stand-up desk to grasp my hand and to give vent to his feelings in some good Anglo-Saxon phrases. Matters started off smoothly, and with fair prospects ahead I supposed I was on shore this time for good. Certainly I had no notion of any immediate personal connection with naval affairs.

But the future is full of surprises. I was at this time boarding in the old brownstone mansion at 216 East 17th Street, and in the same house was a Mr. Tifft, of the firm of Corliss & Tifft, bankers. I knew Mr. Tifft well, and one day he presented me to a new guest, General José M. Carvajal, of Mexico. In due time I learned that General Carvajal was one of those who had been commissioned by President Juarez to raise funds in this country, and that Corliss & Tifft had undertaken to float a Mexican loan. I was now invited to become press agent, and through my bureau I distributed a vast quantity of printed matter, also sending out a news story of General Carvajal's presence in the United States, of his mission and his needs—concluding with the statement that he was about to float a loan, to which all patriotic persons who desired to support the Monroe Doctrine should subscribe.

Our efforts were successful. The public resented the French interference and declared in a substantial manner that Maximilian must go. For the man himself there was no enmity—only compassion. It was what

he represented on American soil that we could not tolerate. The Mexican loan was floated in due season.

Meantime, I had naturally become very friendly with General Carvajal, and he had frequently discussed with me certain proposed naval operations. Eventually he suggested that we visit Washington together, and upon our arrival there asked me to introduce him to David G. Farragut, who had just been made an admiral and was then at the Capital. It was in the old Navy Department building that we met Farragut, and here I introduced the two distinguished men, who at once fell into conversation upon army and navy matters and the problems which those of Mexico presented. At last General Carvajal said:

"Admiral, I am looking for a man to command the Navy of my country. Can you recommend to me such a person?"

Farragut reflected an instant, then, turning to me, laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Why not Osbon, General?" he asked. "I think he's just the man you want."

General Carvajal thanked him and seemed pleased. Then we made our adieus to the admiral and left the building together. As we were going down the steps I said:

"General, you brought me before Farragut to get his indorsement."

"That is a correct guess," he replied; "I did."

Yet I wished him to be fully satisfied in all particulars that I was the man for the place, and somewhat later wrote a letter to my old commanding officer of steam shipping days, Captain John Mc-

Gowan, asking him to express an opinion as to my qualifications. Captain McGowan was now in the Revenue Service, and he replied in due season, as follows:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT.
WASHINGTON, D. C., Sept. 25th, 1866.

Mr. B. S. Osbon served under my command as (third, second, and chief) officer on board the steamships *Illinois, St. Louis,* and *Moses Taylor,* during which time he gave me the fullest satisfaction. He is intelligent, active, energetic and prompt in obeying orders, which are sure signs that he will make a good commander. I have no hesitation in recommending him to fill *any* position on board of *any* class of vessel, as his conduct during the time he has been under my command is a sufficient guarantee he will not be found wanting when *active service* is required.

JOHN MCGOWAN,
Commander, U. S. Revenue Service.

XLI

The Creation of a Navy

IMMEDIATELY upon our return from Washington General Carvajal directed me to take such steps as were necessary to secure and fit out an armed vessel. This had to be done with very great caution. Though declaring openly for the cause of the Mexican Republic, the United States was still at peace with the French nation, and our diplomatic contingent—perhaps a little jealous of its prerogative and its ability to settle matters without the burning of powder—was exceedingly watchful for any move that might be construed as an act of war. It is true the Navy and the Military had little sympathy or patience with this diplomacy. As early as 1864 Grant had declared to his generals that as soon as he had disposed of the Confederates he would begin with the Imperialists in Mexico, and in May, 1865, he had ordered Sheridan with fifty thousand men into the Southwest, ostensibly for the purpose of restoring Texas and Louisiana to the Union, but in reality to have troops ready to throw across the Rio Grande at any moment.

Sheridan was charged by the State Department to be diplomatic, an order which that dashing officer, whose diplomacy was apt to be outlined with the point of a sabre, construed in his own way. He did not

hesitate to render material assistance to Juarez, and at one time sent over thirty thousand muskets from Baton Rouge alone.* The State Department could do no more than discountenance Grant and Sheridan, but an expedition like mine could be nipped in the bud. It was no easy matter to fit out, man, and provision a Mexican ship of war in an American port and to get away to sea, unknown to the civil authorities. My problem was further complicated by French spies, who in some manner had received a hint of our intention and dogged me whichever way I turned.

Yet I eluded them now and then. I kept my news bureau going, and acted through faithful agents when necessary. I selected a steamer in New York, another in Boston, and a third in Philadelphia as possible purchases, and I think we led those French detectives the liveliest chase of their lives. I visited in person the steamers in Boston and New York, but kept away from the one in Philadelphia, the vessel that was to go. My officers and men were selected separately and secretly, no two being ever allowed to meet.

It would require pages to relate even a portion of our experiences in getting our vessel—curiously enough named the *General Sheridan*—into shape for active service. In a comparatively brief period, however, she was ready for sea, and as a blind I made a trip to Boston, returning so that my departure would take place on Sunday, when, as was then the case, the telegraph offices would be closed. I had arranged for

* Sheridan in his memoirs says: "It required the patience of Job to abide the slow and poky methods of our State Department."

a tug to proceed up the Hudson River early on Sunday morning, also for two cars to be attached to the morning express on the Hudson River Railroad. The cars were to take my men a little way up the river, and the tug was to bring them back—the whole being a plan to evade the spies, who, we knew, were now watching us night and day, with the hope of being able to give information sufficiently positive to thwart our undertaking.

My men, each of whom had been notified of the hour and place of starting, came promptly, and filled the two cars waiting in the Hudson River yards. The regular train backed and hooked on to them, and we were off. I knew in all reason that the detectives were on ahead, and, sure enough, when we reached Spuyten Duyvil Creek two of them put in an appearance, and attempted to enter our cars.

It was now time for positive action, and we denied them admittance.

"We are officers of the law," they declared, "and demand that you let us in!"

"Gentlemen," I said, "we don't care a tinker's dam for any law that you represent. If you make a fuss we will drop you off the train."

They retired inside their own coach and we ran along until we were not far from Tarrytown, when we saw our tug, and, by prearrangement, our coupling-pin was drawn and our two cars left behind, slowing down, while the train proceeded on its peaceful way, the two spies shaking their fists and reviling us from the rear platform.

The tug now came along the bank and we hastily

embarked, proceeding back down the river, arriving at Jersey City, where we took train for Philadelphia.

Those were days of slow travel. The train, a freight, took eleven hours to reach Philadelphia, and it was midnight when we marched through the sleeping town toward the Camden ferry. There were eighty of us, officers and men, and we were suddenly hailed by a policeman who demanded our identity and errand.

"A draft of men for the Navy Yard," I said, and we were allowed to pass.

At Kaighn's Point our vessel was under steam and ready for sea, with a number of men on board, recruited around Philadelphia by Mr. Jackway, my captain, himself formerly of the Coast Survey Service—a fine navigator, a brave, capable man, and a thorough sailor of fortune. Our vessel's former commander, however, was still nominally in charge, and we had cleared under his name in order to create no suspicion in the Custom House.

At five next morning a pilot was to have been on board. I waited for him ten minutes, then concluded it unwise to delay longer. Undoubtedly the detectives had by this time suspected our destination, and would be down upon us by the first train. Also, the telegraph was now available, and every moment seemed precious. Without further delay we cast off lines and steamed down the Delaware. The Mexican Navy was under way at last.

XLII

Great Plans, and What Came of Them

THE *General Sheridan,* which we intended to rechristen the *Margarita Juarez,* after the Mexican President's daughter, was what today might be called a large, ocean-going tug. She was about one hundred and twenty-five feet long, and a very powerful vessel. She was to be armed with six Wiard steel rifles and with a torpedo outfit, this armament and our munitions of war to follow on another vessel, owned by the same people who had sold us the *Sheridan.* Our officers and crew were picked men, all veterans of the Civil War, and as fine a lot as I have ever seen collected on one vessel. Our wardroom personnel was pretentious. As chief officer of the embryo navy, I also carried the title of admiral, with power to convert prizes into privateers with letters of marque for destroying the French marine. Next in rank came Captain Jackway, who, in event of our accumulating a squadron, would become fleet captain. I had also two lieutenants and a secretary—the last a remarkable person who spoke and wrote fluently in nine languages. Officers and crew were to have one-half of all prize moneys, and now that we had been allowed to get to sea unmolested, we were a happy set of fellows as we headed for the South, dreaming of stirring adventures and golden fortunes ahead.

My orders from General Carvajal were to proceed to Brazos Santiago, a small harbour just above the mouth of the Rio Grande, there to receive further orders. The general himself was to come down by passenger steamer and be there on my arrival. It was our plan to begin the campaign by following down the Mexican coast, keeping in touch with what was going on by means of information signalled from the shore, finally to slip into the harbour of Vera Cruz by night and destroy the French vessels there, by torpedoing one, and capturing the others in the confusion which would ensue.

As for the merchant marine, we went so far, before leaving New York, as to have ransom bonds prepared for the entire French transatlantic fleet—for the different ships by name, with the amount to be levied on each. Well, it is good to make plans and to dream dreams. The planning and dreaming of themselves are worth something.

We had a rough passage between New York and our destination. I ran into the usual storm off Hatteras and had a hard time to save the vessel. A strong norther was blowing when we arrived off Brazos Santiago, with a big sea on the bar and no more than two wheelbarrow-loads of coal in our bunkers. By the skilful pilotage of Captain Jackway we managed to get in, and I was met immediately upon landing by a representative of General Carvajal, and was conducted by him on horseback to the general's ranch at Brownsville, Texas, a number of miles away. Here we still further perfected our plans, and I returned to the vessel to await our armament and munitions.

But they never came. The vessel carrying them had been caught like ourselves off Hatteras, and with less fortune. She had gone down, and our Wiard rifles and torpedo outfit were at the bottom of the sea.

I took a bronco and rode over to convey the sad news to General Carvajal. He took it stoically.

"Never mind," he said. "To keep your men busy, leave the *Sheridan* at Brazos and come over here." So we packed our baggage, got a lot of teams to do the hauling, and I was presently admiral of a wagon train with a force of "horse-marines" on the way to General Carvajal's ranch. Certainly this was not much like a realisation of our fine plans, and though the boys rather enjoyed going into camp as a sort of a picnic, I began to suspect that my dreams of conquest and naval supremacy had come to a sudden and rather ridiculous end.

But General Carvajal was not disturbed. He took me to the Rio Grande and pointing down the Mexican side, said,

"There is a gunboat belonging to the Mexican Navy, but she has fallen into the hands of the Revolutionists. Do you think you can capture her by boarding?"

The Revolutionists, it should be said, had little or nothing to do with the affair we had come to settle, but carried on a sort of guerrilla warfare in the State of Tamaulipas—there being many of these local revolutions at this time.

The vessel across the river was a sidewheel steamboat of the ordinary Western river type, of very light draft and lying in shallow water. The river at this

time was low, and it seemed only a question of swimming a short distance and surprising a small crew on board. I looked at the prospective prize for a moment and said I thought the boys would like the job. In fact, I knew they would, for they were just the sort of fellows for that kind of work. When we returned to the ranch and I proposed it to them, they wanted to set out at once.

We decided that the next night would be a good time to capture the *Chinaco* (which translated means "robber," or "thief"), and accordingly, a little after dusk on the following day, we went down to the river bank with our revolvers and ammunition tied to our heads, and waded out very silently until it was necessary to swim. After swimming a distance of perhaps thirty yards we were once more in wading depth, and crept silently up under the guards of the steamer, which drew not more than two and one-half feet of water; and before our friends knew we were anywhere in the neighbourhood we had boarded from all sides. They surrendered without firing a shot, and the Mexican Admiral had a new flagship, carrying one twelve-pounder brass rifle and six mountain howitzers as a total armament. Notwithstanding her light battery, she was a serviceable vessel for river use, and when a few days later we had the *Margarita Juarez,* as I concluded to name her, in apple-pie order, with a supply of ammunition borrowed from the United States forces in Brownsville, and with a crew of one hundred and twenty picked men, we constituted rather a formidable adjunct of the Juarez Government, as time proved.

There now succeeded several weeks of waiting filled with minor events, many of which I could not explain, but which I now suspect resulted from the lack of harmony between the State and Military Departments at Washington. I think very few of us understood what was going on, or what were our positions at that time. For myself, I was nominally in the employ of the Mexican Republic, yet it is quite certain that my supplies, and many of my orders, were of American origin, the latter transmitted through General Carvajal.

I have always suspected that there was some plan on foot, in which the restoration of Juarez was only the first step, and that General Grant was chiefly concerned in the idea. Grant was always an annexationist, and certainly there was little evidence at this time that Mexico, under any form of government, was able to govern herself. Furthermore there was thought to be need of an outlet for the manumitted slaves and for the large floating element of white men who had served as soldiers in the Union army. Always deeply interested in Mexican affairs, it is not impossible that Grant's programme included a dream of extending our dominion across the Rio Grande to embrace the land of the Montezumas.

But whatever the purpose—if there was a purpose—it came to nothing, and thus far has not been made public. Generals Grant, Lew Wallace, Sheridan, and perhaps Sherman, knew what was going on, and General Wallace must have thought that I was in the secret, for at a Grand Army Encampment dinner long afterward he said: "Gentlemen, let me present to you

Admiral Osbon of the late Mexican Navy. If you and the world at large knew what *we* know, you would know more than we are willing to tell. If the movement inaugurated, in which we took part, had been consummated, our names would have gone ringing down the ages." About a year ago I wrote to General Wallace concerning the matter, but he was too ill to reply, and never recovered. Perhaps in the autobiography which he has left behind he will clear up the story.

At all events, those of us who were obeying orders were kept a good deal in the fog. General Sedgwick, who commanded the Department of the Rio Grande, and Colonel Alonzo F. Randall, of the First Light Artillery at Brownsville, were no wiser than myself. They received curious, and sometimes contradictory, orders emanating from unknown sources and not always easy to fulfil. For my own part, I cruised up and down the river without much to do, keeping mostly to the American bank, as revolutions were still in progress in Tamaulipas, the sound of musketry in Matamoras being an everyday occurrence. If I remember rightly there were no less than nine governors in that city in the space of a few months. I used to ask the sentinel at my door, "Well, orderly, who is governor this morning?" And sometimes he would answer: "I think there has been no change over night. I have heard no firing."

XLIII

The Mexican Navy Distinguishes Itself

CURIOUS incidents followed one upon another, interesting enough at the time, even exciting, but often without definite purpose and seldom with tangible result. At one time I received orders from General Carvajal to go down the river to take on board a hundred sharpshooters, consigned to me from New Orleans, evidently with the consent of United States military authority, yet upon reaching the designated point I was obliged to receive them under cover of my guns, owing to the fierce opposition of United States Customs officials. At another time I awoke one morning to find a pontoon bridge stretched across the river from Brownsville to Matamoras, making a military connection from the American to the Mexican side. Later in the day, General Cortina, commander of the Revolutionary forces, then in control in Matamoras, sent word that unless the bridge was removed he would open fire on Brownsville.

General Sedgwick, who understood no more than I why he had been ordered to make the pontoon connection, deputised me to wait upon Cortina, which I did. Our interview opened with drawn pistols and closed with brandy and cigars, in true Mexican fashion. I returned with General Cortina's ultimatum, that unless the bridge was removed the firing upon Browns-

ville would open next day at noon. Naturally, we were all a bit anxious for the outcome of this mysterious incident, which, as usual, ended with nothing, for at precisely fifteen minutes of the given time there came from somewhere another mysterious order, and a detachment of United States troops marched across the pontoon bridge, cast it adrift from the Mexican side and let it swing down parallel with the American bank.

At still another time, when General Canales was in Revolutionary command, word came across that unless my vessel was removed from the American bank the Matamoras guns would open on her, regardless of what damage might be done to Brownsville. After considerable discussion with the United States authorities, I decided to disarm my vessel, land my guns and ammunition and leave the matter for Uncle Sam to decide. It was just at this time that General Sherman and a Mr. Campbell, who had been sent to Mexico as special commissioners, arrived in the *Susquehanna,* off Brazos Santiago. Learning of their coming, I hurried over with two of my staff and four extra horses, to welcome them. As the United States authorities at Brownsville had no conveyance to send but an ambulance, it was natural that an old soldier like Sherman should accept my horses and my escort.

"Damn an ambulance when you can get a horse!" he said, and we discussed my difficulties all the way over, with the result that on the following Sunday morning, with our guns and ammunition on board, and with a brass band borrowed for the occasion, I

hoisted my admiral's flag once more on the *Margarita Juarez,* assured of the protection of the military of the United States. It will be seen from these incidents, unimportant as they appear, how curious was the naval and military situation along the Rio Grande during the final days of the so-called Mexican Empire.

In the meantime the republican cause had prospered greatly. In spite of excuses and delays on the part of Napoleon, and of the pleadings of the Empress Carlotta, who besought that sovereign on her knees, the French troops were retiring. Already they had abandoned northern Mexico, and with the Maximilian empire doomed, Juarez was now in a position to give attention to the Revolutionists in Tamaulipas. About the middle of November (1866) a report reached us that a large force under General Escobedo was marching on Matamoras with a view of putting the Liberal Government in control.

In due time he arrived, and with his six thousand men went into camp above the city. Immediately I went over to pay my respects to him and to offer the services of the Mexican Navy for whatever they might be worth. He thanked me pleasantly, and I supposed he would advise me when he was ready to make the attack, so that I might get into a position to flank the forts with my fire.

He did not do so, and one morning about two o'clock I was aroused by a terrible cannonading, and knew that General Escobedo had begun the assault. Without concerted arrangement, I did not feel justified in attempting to use my guns or to land my forces,

for I had no knowledge of his plans. I therefore became merely a spectator, or listener, to the clash of arms. Then all at once it ceased. I expected to hear shouts of triumph as Escobedo's troops entered the streets of Matamoras, but there came no sound except of cheering along the lines of fortification. I saddled a horse and going ashore rode to Escobedo's camp, where troops were pouring in pellmell, in wild disorder.

I found the general, and presenting my compliments asked him why he did not notify me of the coming attack and allow me to render such assistance as I could.

He was in deep distress at his defeat, declaring that his engineers had misled him as to the works, that, among other things, they had built sixteen-foot scaling ladders for a moat twenty-two feet wide. The Revolutionists had allowed his troops to get within short range, and then mowed down six hundred of them in ten minutes. The repulse had been sudden and complete.

I now resolved to take Matamoras without the assistance of General Escobedo. I came back to the vessel and announced to my officers and men that, as we were unable to get our pay, and had hard work even to get rations—all of which was true enough, Heaven knows—I had resolved to turn the vessel for a time into a merchantman, to earn some money. They seemed well disposed toward this idea, and to give it official colour I announced next day in the Brownsville *Ranchero* that the *Margarita Juarez* had been transferred to the merchant marine and would accept passengers

and freight for up-river points. We also landed our guns and my forces went into camp.

Of course I apprised General Carvajal of my plan, and with his assistance had dummy freight especially prepared for the trip. This in due season came aboard, and there was also a small amount of genuine freight, while a few passengers engaged staterooms. When all was ready at last, the men were taken into our confidence, and on the last night the guns were once more quietly taken aboard, and concealed behind the dummy freight.

We were advertised to sail at ten o'clock next morning, but when our passengers came down we put them off with an excuse that we would not leave that day, and did not let them aboard. They must have been surprised when at eleven o'clock we cast off and steamed up the river, to all appearances a peaceful merchantman, loaded and bound up stream. Certainly this is what we appeared to the Revolutionists on the Matamoras side, and this was the impression we had laboured to create. We had further arranged with one Colonel Ford, an American in command of a Liberal battery on the Mexican shore—his position in the Army being an anomalous one, similar to that of mine in the Navy—to act in conjunction with us; and when we were just coming abreast of the Revolutionist fortifications, over went our dummy freight, the men appeared at the guns, and simultaneously with Ford we let go, giving the Revolutionists a complete surprise, tumbling them out of their forts one after another, taking them seriatim until we had the entire eight. It was really great sport. The Revolutionists

were enfiladed by a fire which made their position untenable, and they ran like rats, hardly pausing to return our fire. In just an hour and forty minutes Matamoras was ours, and General Escobedo and his army marched in in great triumph. As for the Mexican Navy, it modestly went back and tied itself to the American bank. It had distinguished itself at last. It was willing that the Army should do the shouting.

XLIV

An Exciting New Year's Eve

THE war in Mexico was one of vengeance and reprisal. From the beginning, both sides had pursued guerrilla tactics, with campaigns of massacre and rapine. The "Black Decree"—forced by his ministers upon Maximilian—an edict by which everyone bearing arms against the empire became liable to the death penalty, and the enforcement of this infamous proscription, resulted in deeds and measures unknown to any civilised code of arms. Even where hostilities had ended, the flow of blood went on. Details of riflemen were kept busy, filling graves.

At Matamoras, it is true, a large number of the Revolutionists came over to the National army and were forgiven; but there were many who were renegades by nature and petty criminals by choice. These, if captured, were given short shrift. General Bereosabel, who with Escobedo's occupation became Governor of Tamaulipas, was a fine gentleman with an English education, but his knowledge of the law related chiefly to its execution—the latter usually attended with results fatal to the offender. With the Mexican Navy now tied up to the Mexican bank, I could observe these conditions at close range, and every morning the the sound of musketry volleys brought the tidings that another detachment of prisoners had paid the extreme penalty of error.

"General," I said, one day, "if you keep on shooting these fellows, we shall presently have ten women to every man in this end of Mexico. Instead of killing these poor devils, why don't you set them to work?"

"What can I do with them?" he asked.

"Well," I replied, "the streets of Matamoras are in wretched condition. Let them lay paving stone. There's plenty of it up the river. Give me a lot of these fellows, and I will set them to getting out the material; I will bring it down on the vessel,—the Mexican Navy isn't very busy just now."

General Bereosabel approved of the idea, and before long I had a supply of recruits, all willing to get out stone for any number of days in preference to looking once into a musket barrel at sunrise. Of course I kept armed and alert for possible outbreaks. I wish I had been equally thoughtful during my next undertaking.

I had made two trips as a stone droger, when I was ordered by the Governor to go up the river with a load of rifles and ammunition (doubtless a consignment from Sheridan) and a considerable amount of specie. I was also to have three passengers—the Governor's niece, who was to visit some friends up the river, and two troublesome Revolutionary generals, who were to be delivered to the military at a given point, from which they would be conducted to some unknown destination. The generals I was to supply with rations, allowing them to find quarters where they could. General Bereosabel's niece—a spirited young lady, as events proved—was assigned the best stateroom in the vessel, the one adjoining my own, with doors opening both to the main cabin and the deck,

as is the case with all river steamers. My reasons for being thus explicit will develop later.

The chief feature of my expedition, however, as it turned out, was a company of eighty *casadores* or light infantrymen—converted Revolutionists for the most part—which General Bereosabel detailed to accompany me, as a guard for the treasure. Perhaps he thought my crew incompetent for this duty. Perhaps he was afraid I would vanish with both his niece and the specie. At all events, the company of armed infantry came aboard, while my own men, being more or less off duty, stored their arms and made themselves comfortable in the after part of the lower main deck. Of course we were entirely in the hands of the *casadores,* and with two Revolutionist generals aboard—one of them Hernandez, a notorious agitator—it seems strange to me now that no possibility of trouble entered my mind. At all events, it did not, and we devoted our ingenuities chiefly to keeping warm, for it was the last day of the year, and very cold for the climate.

It seldom snows on the Rio Grande, but it snowed that day, and a stiff norther was blowing that chilled us through. All sorts of provision were made for General Bereosabel's niece, while as many as could gathered about an improvised stove in the forward end of the cabin. When night fell, it was snowing quite hard, and I tied up to the American bank, as I considered navigation dangerous in that narrow, crooked river.

After the evening meal was over I sat down with several of the officers around the little stove forward for a social chat. I had on my slippers, and for the

only time during my stay in Mexico I did not wear a brace of revolvers at my waist.

The New Year's Eve slipped away pleasantly, and I remember that we were discussing life in the tropics when the steward came in and informed Captain Jackway that General Hernandez, who had retired, had taken the blankets out of two other rooms into his own, and refused to deliver them to their respective owners.

I was naturally irritated at this report. My orders had been to supply my officer prisoners with nothing but food, and I had already allowed them good quarters and as much in the way of comfort as was possible. I now left my chair, and going to Hernandez, explained to him in pretty forcible Spanish, of which I had a very good command, that he had no right to enter any room but his own, and that he must surrender the appropriated blankets forthwith. He glared at me fiercely for a second, then suddenly whipping out a revolver, stuck it within three inches of my face and pulled the trigger.

Why the charge failed to explode I do not know. I do know that I grabbed his arm with my left hand, and when he did fire, an instant later, the bullet passed through the upper deck. By this time I had concluded that it was to be my life or his. Holding his arm straight and extended upward with my left hand I struck it a heavy blow with my right fist. I think I must have been very strong in those days, for the blow not only sent his pistol flying but broke the upper bone of his arm. I did not realise this at the moment, and grappled with him, forcing him toward the glass door,

intending to push his head through it, and so have him at my mercy.

But by this time something else had happened. What had been the original plan between Hernandez and the *casadores* I do not know, but, whatever it was, my affair with the archplotter had brought it to a sudden climax. The shot fired by Hernandez had been a signal for the seizing of our armory, my men had been corralled and were under guard below, while Captain Jackway and the officers about the stove had been surrounded and overpowered. A number of the mutineers were now upon me, clubbing at me with their muskets, only failing to strike me for want of room to get action.

I knew immediately what was up, and that, unarmed as I was, my only hope was in escape. I heard the order given to shoot me down, and I made a break, and with a bound was under the long cabin table, scampering on my hands and knees toward my state-room, the soldiers firing wildly, filling the cabin with smoke, which became the means of my getting to my room unharmed. Here I hastily bolted the door, and had buckled on my pistols to go out and face them, when suddenly I felt a hand on my arm and, turning, found General Bereosabel's niece, who had entered by the outside door. She was cooler than I, and better able to reason.

"You are not going out there," she said; "they will kill you."

I realised that this was a sound opinion, and stepped back through the outside door into the snow, intending to go over the side of the vessel and make my way

to a United States military station not many miles distant. But the *casadores* were already battering at the inner door and would be upon me in another instant. My wise-headed little companion realised this, and without a word seized me firmly, and a second later I was in her stateroom with both doors locked and bolted, while the *casadores* were now eagerly searching and prodding in my empty apartment. Then a little later they were at the señorita's door, demanding admission.

I have heard a good deal of Spanish in my life, and a good many instructions concerning the deference and respect due to a lady, but I have never heard a finer example of the language nor a more concise lesson in Spanish etiquette than that young lady delivered to those murderous Greasers through the door of her stateroom that cold New Year's Eve on the Rio Grande. She ended by telling them that I had gone over the side of the vessel, at which statement they hurried out on deck, and in the dim light seeing the half obliterated tracks in the snow, accepted her statement. Then, after barricading my men in the after cabin below, they moved the vessel to mid-stream, posted a guard, and gathered about the little stove forward, to wait for morning.

Through the door and partitions we could hear the orders, and knew what was going on. By and by, when all got still, I suspected that, in true Mexican fashion, most of the enemy had gone to sleep. By two in the morning it was perfectly quiet, and I decided to reconnoitre the situation. My companion also realised that some action was necessary, and, softly

opening her outside door, allowed me to step out on the deck. I hardly know what was my purpose. Certainly, swimming ashore on such a night would be a last resort. Slipping forward and peering down on the lower deck I saw that the guard there, like the others, had gone to sleep. It consisted of three men by the brass pivot gun, which had been turned to cover the cabin, the plan having been to blow us all into eternity as we sat around the stove. One of the guards lay across the gun, the other two being huddled under the bulwarks.

In my slippers, through the snow, I crawled along with a revolver in my left hand until I reached the first man under the bulwarks, and with a single blow from his own musket eliminated one factor of my problem. A well-directed and energetic kick in a carefully selected spot disposed of the gentleman at his side, and as this roused the man across the gun it was necessary to shoot him, which of course instantly awoke the group sleeping about the cabin stove, causing them to jump up and throw open the doors to see what was going on.

But by this time I was ready for them. The brass gun covered them completely, and in the fiercest and most ferocious Spanish I could command I swore that if one of them lifted a hand I would blow the whole lot to Hades. I could have done it, too, for the gun was heavily loaded with grape, and to have pulled the friction primer lanyard would have slaughtered that crowd almost to a man.

I can't begin to describe the foolish, helpless looks of those fellows. They were armed; but they knew I

was desperate, and that the movement of a weapon would bring death upon them all. Perhaps the reader will faintly realise the tension I was under during the moment of silence they stood looking at me. Then they begged for mercy.

"Drop your guns," I called, "every one of you! Come down one at a time, unarmed. If I see a suspicious move I will fire."

They obeyed like Sunday-school boys, and I ordered Hernandez and his companion in arms, who had now appeared, to see that my men were released, which they did.

Then the reaction took place, and I wanted to sit down quietly with somebody about like General Bereosabel's niece to help me think it over. We celebrated, too, for our steward came running with a bottle of wine and some hot tamales—an early New Year's feast on the Rio Grande.

I suppose, to make the story complete, it ought to end with a romance in which we should play the chief parts. My recollection is that neither of us thought of anything of the sort. She was simply one of the courageous girls of those troublous times, a worthy scion of a noble race, who gave a hand to a sailor of fortune at an opportune moment. It was my honour and pleasure to land her safely at her destination, and I have never seen her since she bade me good-bye that day, now almost forty years ago.

As for the generals and the *casadores*—well, as I said in the beginning of this chapter, General Bereosabel's idea of law related chiefly to its execution.

Meantime, we had great difficulties in getting our

pay from the Mexican treasury. General Bereosabel issued orders for our money, but we had to resort to various devices to get the cash. Finally, when there were several thousand dollars due me, with no present prospect of collection, and as there was little or no further use for my services, that I could see, I made up my mind to resign, a decision that was somewhat hastened by the discovery that there were no less than eighty native applicants for my position. It seemed quite certain that if there were eighty Mexicans who wanted to command the Mexican Navy, my resignation was likely to take the form of a funeral service, unless I got it in early, in the usual way. Eighty to one was an odds too heavy even for an admiral, and my resignation went in, despite General Bereosabel's protest.

It was now late spring, and the conflict in lower Mexico was nearly over. By the middle of March the last of the French troops had departed, and Maximilian, abandoned to his fate, was doomed. Many of the French soldiers had agreed to remain individually for a certain bounty, but, after accepting it, deserted at the last moment. The poor monarch's fate was now sad indeed. Carlotta, who had failed in her efforts with Napoleon and in other directions, had been unable to stand the mental strain, and was wandering about the beautiful castle Miramar, on the Adriatic, near Trieste, her mind full of disordered fancies. About Maximilian, only a hopelessly small force of his Mexican supporters gathered, and these, as one defeat succeeded another, rapidly melted away.

Yet he struggled on. Still strong in his purpose of

good—still believing that upon him depended the salvation of a disordered Government—he remained steadfast, refusing to abdicate, refusing to abandon a people who, because he loved them, must surely, one day, uphold his cause.

Overwhelmed at last, captured, his days were numbered. It was at Querétaro that he made his last stand, and here, as always, he showed the hero's self-denial and courage, foregoing all personal comforts, ministering to the sick and wounded, refusing at last to escape when it became known that the day was lost.

"I do not hide myself," he said, and knowing his beloved Carlotta's hopeless fate, he longed only for the bullet which would release him from the sorrow and bitterness of it all.*

Rumours of the fighting and the victories of Juarez came to us on the Rio Grande, and we knew that the end was near, though it was not until after my departure that the story was complete. I went over to New Orleans after my resignation, where I was presented to General Sheridan by our Mexican Minister, Mr. Campbell, under my late rank and title. This closed my connection with the Mexican affair, though, curiously enough, in a civil capacity I was to perform a final duty—to add the final touch, as it were, to an episode of which I had seen the prelude in Havana Harbour five years before.

I had been in New Orleans but a week when I became boarding officer of the New York Associated

*"Now for a lucky bullet, Salm!" was Maximilian's cry to his loyal friend, Prince Salm-Salm, as he saw the white flag go up near him.

Press, at Southwest Pass (an entrance to the river below New Orleans). It was my duty to board all vessels for news of any sort.

On the morning of June 29th, 1867, very soon after my arrival, I looked out over the bar and saw, lying outside, an Austrian man-o'-war, her colours at half-mast and bordered with black. There was no telegraph connection with Mexico in those days. I knew instantly that she had brought news, and I could guess well enough what it was. When I boarded the vessel, which I did without delay, the captain gravely took me into his cabin and told me that he had a communication which, as representative of the Associated Press, I would be permitted to make public; but that I must pledge myself not to allow it to appear in print until it had reached the Austrian and French ministers at Washington. He then told me how on the morning of the 19th of June, at Querétaro, on the "Hill of Bells," where they had met defeat, Maximilian and his two generals, Miramon and Meji, had faced a file of soldiers, and so made the supreme expiation. Maximilian had died as he had lived—brave of heart and gentle of spirit—forgiving those whose duty it was to take his life—refusing at the last the bandage for his eyes.*

* In his last hours Maximilian wrote a noble letter to Juarez, whose spirit he admired, and a tender message to the poor demented soul who was watching for his coming at Miramar. The letter to Carlotta was as follows:

My Beloved Carlotta:

If God permits that your health be restored, and you should read these few lines, you will learn the cruelty with which fate

We computed the cable tolls, for I was also to forward the message direct to Paris and Vienna, and he paid me the amount in gold. Returning to my headquarters, I opened the wire to New Orleans, called Mr. Mingle, then manager of the telegraph department, and, having obtained his assurance that the news would be kept sacred until it was in the hands of the legations at Washington, I forwarded the story, which he received in person.

For nearly twenty-four hours the public knew nothing of the matter. Then, if I remember rightly, the announcement of the death of Maximilian was made simultaneously in Europe and the United States.* I had seen the beginning of an international tragedy. I had received the news of its end.

has stricken me since your departure for Europe. You took with you, not only my heart, but my good fortune. Why did I not give heed to your voice? So many untoward events! Alas, so many sudden blows have stricken my hopes; so that death is but a happy deliverance, not an agony to me. I shall die gloriously, like a soldier, like a monarch, vanquished, but not dishonoured. If your sufferings are too great, and God shall call you to join me, I shall bless His divine hand which has weighed so heavily upon us. Adieu, adieu.

Your poor

MAXIMILIAN.

It is probable that Carlotta never comprehended this letter. "He is dead—they will kill him—I know the Mexicans," she is said to have declared in a semi-lucid interval. Yet she never ceased to believe him living, and to this day, still alive herself, cared for now in her own native Belgium, she is watching for his return.

*The first brief announcement of Maximilian's death was made by the press June 30th, 1867.

XLV

I Attend the Havre Exposition, and Welcome Mrs. Farragut

I REMAINED about one year at Southwest Pass, during which time, besides being the official news gatherer, I held the positions of deputy United States marshal, commodore of the New Orleans towboat fleet, and doctor of medicine of the port. My experience as a sea captain fitted me for the last named post, for I had dealt with almost every known disease in every known climate, and I believe I had some natural faculty for the business.

At Southwest Pass I had at one time fifty-two cases of yellow fever. And of these I did not lose one, which I think is a pretty good record.

Curious things happened at that strange half-water, half-mud place which sticks out into the Gulf of Mexico like a fishing pole, but I have not the space to set them down here. One storm still gathers in my mind, out of the many terrible semi-tropic gales of that locality —a storm presaged only by some strange subcomprehension which makes the pelican fly low and disturbs the fish, but is not revealed by the barometer. All the morning I had watched them—the birds skimming the surface of the water and the fish shooting about in that unusual way, feeling an inward something of my own that foretold disaster. I was so sure by ten

o'clock that a gale was coming, though there was not a single tangible sign, that I hoisted the signal, "Prepare for a Hurricane."

There were a number of vessels anchored in the river, waiting to be towed to New Orleans, and their captains came or sent ashore to know why I had hoisted the signal. When I explained, they laughed; but I kept the signal flying. The pilots laughed, too; but I did not haul down the flags.

Then the captain of a little bark and his mate—both had their families aboard—came to ask why I expected a gale. I told them as best I could how the pelicans were flying low and the fish were disturbed, and how the alligators had gone into holes. I advised him to put his vessel into the bank across the river, well anchored and stripped for a hurricane. Those men did not laugh. They had their wives and children aboard and were taking no chances. They followed my instructions to the letter; and at two o'clock that night there was blowing one of the wildest hurricanes I have ever known. The river rose until I was obliged to pass a couple of hawsers over my house and lash it to the piling, and to cut holes through the floor to let in the water for ballast, to keep from drifting away. A pilot boat was swept by and went high and dry on the marsh. The vessels waiting to be towed to New Orleans were driven about and scattered like ships of straw. One of our towboats was there, and I ordered her sunk to her main deck to keep her off the marsh. Next morning, she and the little bark anchored on the left bank were the only vessels not driven ashore and damaged. Our wrecking tugs pulled thirteen of them

off; and I do not believe there was a captain in that fleet that ever disregarded from that day, no matter what the barometer might indicate, the more mysterious warnings of the wise pelicans, the alligators, and the fish.

I left Southwest Pass for a voyage to Europe, for I was suffering from my old unlucky knee and I was told that an ocean voyage would benefit me. I was also going for another reason, for in the course of my many travels I had met one Eliza Balfour—a young lady of Scotch descent—of the Balfours of Burleigh, and we were to meet and be married on the other side. Our wedding took place at Liverpool, and after a brief time we crossed over to Havre to attend the Maritime Exposition, the first of the kind ever held in Europe.

Before leaving America I had made arrangements with the New York *Times,* the Philadelphia *Inquirer,* and papers in each of the other chief cities of the United States for foreign correspondence, and on the other side the London *Times,* the Manchester *Guardian,* the Liverpool *Post,* and *Mercury* engaged articles on the Maritime show. It was not customary in those days to syndicate descriptive matter, so that each of my letters had to be separately written and differently constructed. Yet I did not find this a difficult undertaking, once I got going. There was a vast deal to see, all the time, and no one letter, or ten, could cover it all. The London *Times* presently invited me to send a letter as often as circumstances would warrant, and the pay was most liberal for those days. Being the only American newspaper man in Havre I was treated with

great courtesy, and unusual facilities were accorded me for getting interesting facts.

Near my headquarters in the Exposition was the working model of a pneumatic telegraph apparatus which interested me very much. In time I familiarised myself with the details of its method, and frequently explained it to visitors who happened along.

One day a tall, gaunt, grey-eyed Englishman overheard a part of one of my impromptu lectures, and presently, when we were alone, asked me if I would explain the principles of the pneumatic telegraph to him. His interest and manner appealed to me and I did my best. He listened with great attention, asking many questions. When I had finished, he said:

"My name is Weir. I am the president of the company that owns this machine. It is, as you say, particularly adapted to the needs of naval vessels. If you care to handle it for us at this Exposition, and will undertake to introduce it into the French Navy, I will give you a one-fifth interest in the patents, and allow you six pounds sterling per week for expenses."

I clinched the bargain at once, and with the income from my news correspondence I now had what was then considered a very excellent provision for life on the Continent.

In fact, I may say that fortune seemed to smile about this time. Admiral and Mrs. Farragut were that year making a tour abroad and were everywhere received with great honours. If I remember rightly, the admiral was in poor health, and was unable to attend the Exposition; but Mrs. Farragut came up from the Mediterranean on the sloop of war *Canandaigua,* and

was welcomed with great ceremony. Rest assured, I was on hand when the ship was announced, and received a most cordial greeting from the wife of my old commander. Indeed, the gentle and noble old lady had always been like a mother to me after the New Orleans episode, and I remember once, when I went to call on the admiral in his home, after the war was ended, how she kissed me and declared I had saved her husband's life.

At the Havre Exposition it was the same. A day was fixed for her visit, and it was arranged that I should call for her and conduct her through the show. She was received in state by the mayor and civic officials, and when we made the rounds she kept my arm throughout, everywhere making known the fact that I had been her husband's signal officer at New Orleans, and declaring that I had saved his life. I think we were the centre of attention at the Exposition on that day, which I still recall with great pride; and I shall always revere the beautiful nature and kind heart of the noble woman who made that day possible.

Of course an event of this sort could not fail to count for me in the advancement of my plans concerning the French Navy. I was made one of the judges on exhibits pertaining to the outfitting of ships with labour-saving appliances, and I did not fail to direct attention to the pneumatic telegraph, in which I had a genuine and most enthusiastic faith. It was near the end of the show, when one day a very nice old gentleman came to see the model, and when I had explained it in such French as I could command he said:

"Now, sir, if you will please tell me all about it in

English, I think I can understand it much better," and he handed me his card.

I was a bit chagrined, expecting to see the name of an Englishman who had not comprehended a single word I had said. I was mistaken. The card bore the name of Admiral Paris, of the French Navy, one of the men I most desired to meet. We immediately became good friends, and I felt that I had made a long step in the direction of business success.

XLVI

I Have Dealings with Napoleon III.—A Remorseful Emperor

AT the close of the Exposition at Havre I went to Paris and began a vigorous campaign with a view of establishing the pneumatic telegraph on the French naval marine. Through my new friend, the admiral, who was himself preparing a work on naval architecture and appliances, I made the acquaintance of a number of influential officers and officials, and felt that I was getting along swimmingly.

It was necessary, however, to secure the imperial approval before a demonstration could be given of the apparatus; also, of course, before an order could be obtained from the French Government. Napoleon III. was not an easy man to see in those days, and even Admiral Paris did not care to suggest that he would arrange an interview. I secured the coveted presentation at last in a peculiar manner.

From the beginning, in France, I was known to have been in Mexico, in the service of the Juarez Government, and was placed on the list of suspects. I think by this time there was no feeling against me personally; but it was natural that the authorities should wish to be quite certain of my errand, when the French and Mexican complications had been so recently ad-

justed, and when there was still so much resentment toward the French emperor on account of his connection with the Maximilian tragedy.

I was watched continually, my letters were opened, even the servants in the house where my wife and I had apartments acted as spies. Those were troublous times in France, just prior to the Franco-German war, and everyone of whom there was the least suspicion was kept under close surveillance.

Of my followers, one of the most persistent, was an Englishman. Go where I would, I could see his face. At the Café Royal one morning he planted himself directly in front of me. I felt the time had come to speak.

"My friend," I began, "will you join me at breakfast? I have something to say to you."

He looked at me a moment and shifted his seat closer. I said:

"You have favoured me with your company so long, I think I ought to introduce myself. My name is Osbon, as you know. I live in the Rue de la Pepiniere. I am here on business—to sell, if possible, to the French Government a pneumatic telegraph system, owned by a company in London. I have served in the Mexican Navy as its senior officer; but I am no longer connected with that Government and have no interest in its movements. I don't like to be followed around Paris as if I were a revolutionist or a regicide. You have a pleasant sort of a face, but I see it too often."

"My dear sir," he said, "there is some mistake. It is true I have seen you before, but I am simply an

English gentleman, formerly a British consul, living quietly in Paris."

"Well," I replied, "you may be an English gentleman, and you may have been a British consul. But you are at this moment a French spy—a *mouchard*."

He looked at me keenly a moment, then he said:

"Perhaps I can be of assistance to you. How would you like an introduction to the Emperor?"

This was business, and I replied promptly, "Nothing would give me greater pleasure."

"Make it worth my while and I will get you a personal interview," was his next remark.

"What is your 'while' worth?" I asked.

"For five hundred dollars I will present you to the Emperor, and you can show him the apparatus. You must do your own business after that."

When we left the breakfast table I had agreed to meet him at the office of the Emperor's chamberlain on the following Wednesday. Without delay I hurried over to London, told Mr. Weir of my arrangement, a meeting of the board was called and the five hundred dollars voted and placed in my hands.

On Wednesday morning promptly at eleven o'clock I was at the imperial chamberlain's office, to find my British friend there. I showed him the money and told him that when I had seen the Emperor and had my interview the money would be his. Ten minutes later I was in the presence of Napoleon III.

I know now that the Emperor had been induced to see me on the ground that I had come from Mexico, and, having held a commanding position with the opposing forces, would likely be able to communicate

interesting and perhaps valuable information. Napoleon was at this time filled with remorse at the thought of having sent Maximilian to his doom, and I saw almost immediately that he was hungry for every word from the fallen empire. He permitted me to show him a small model of the telegraph machine, and called in the young Prince Imperial to look at it. Then turning to me anxiously he said,

"Mr. Osbon, you have been in Mexico."

I saw how eager he was in his interest, and I told him in detail the story of my going to Mexico, and some of my experiences there. He was most minute in his questions, but I did not tell him all, for I wanted another interview. In reply to some of his inquiries I said—and it was true—"I will have to consult my papers before I can reply to your satisfaction."

Promising to return in a few days with further information, I left his presence, joined my Englishman and turned over the stipulated sum, feeling, as one would say in nautical terms, that I had both anchors down in France.

I called alone, after that. He never refused to see me, and we always talked much more of Mexico than of the machine. I found I had much to tell that interested him—in fact, every small detail of those final days seemed to fascinate him, and when I told him of the arrival of the Austrian vessel at Southwest Pass draped in mourning, he seemed to hang on my very words. That I had chanced to be the one to receive and forward the tragic news of Maximilian's end gave me a peculiar importance in his eyes.

The third time I called I asked him to give me a letter to the Minister of Marine requesting that a test of the pneumatic telegraph be made on board a French man-of-war. He assented readily, and with the precious missive I sought the minister and was introduced to the senior officer commanding the Mediterranean Fleet. I was not long in obtaining a requisition to have the machine fitted up on the *Jeanne d'Arc,* the flagship of the squadron. The wedge was in at last, and in due season I was notified that the vessel was ready to be fitted with the appliance.

I now sent to London, brought over six first-class men, the piping and the machines, and went down to Cherbourg to install them. We had a royal time, for quarters and all comforts were placed at our disposal, and when the machines were installed we went on a trial trip and demonstrated the practicability of the apparatus.

Yet I was by no means through with the Emperor. What I wanted, now, was the Government order, and I had many interviews with the French sovereign, during which, though he was chiefly interested in Mexico and I in the machine, we got along famously.

One day I said to him, "I wish I had here a trunk I have at home. It contains some documents which might interest you."

He said, "Send for it at once. Cable for it. Sit down here and write a cable, and I will see that it is sent. Who has this trunk?"

"My father."

"Very well. Tell your father to send the trunk to the office of the *Compagnie Génèrale Transatlantique,*

at New York. The company will be instructed to forward it to you in Paris."

The longest cable I ever wrote went to my father that night, and in due season the trunk arrived. I was notified by wire from Havre, and when I went to meet it I found it guarded by an official, who accompanied me with it to my rooms, even insisting that it be placed inside of our carriage.

On the following day I took some of the documents over to show to Napoleon. They were chiefly official reports, among them being, I think, certain papers emanating from the Mexican emperor's headquarters, these having in some manner fallen into our hands. They do not now seem to me to have been of any special importance, but to him they were as priceless treasures. Whenever I wanted to see the Emperor now, the door was always open. There seemed nothing that he was not ready to grant. When at last a favourable report came from the committee of experts appointed to pass on the machine, and I was delayed only by the official appraisements of value, I went to the Emperor and told him that we would agree upon a price of thirty thousand pounds, and the matter was settled upon that basis. When there came another delay, this time in the payment, another interview with the Emperor resulted in our receiving one-half the purchase money, forthwith. So you see it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. Poor Maximilian's venture had resulted tragically enough for him, and it cast a dark shadow over Napoleon's latter days. But without my reminiscences of that sombre episode it is quite certain that I should have found but a poor welcome at

the French Court. I may say here that in due time I received my fifth interest of the French purchase, and felt fairly well-to-do. But our company lost heavily by the Franco-Prussian war, which even then was brewing, and the downfall of Napoleon and later patents and appliances eventually brought our business to an end.

I will close this chapter with a humorous incident which has little to do with the subject as a whole, yet seems worth recalling.

During our stay in Paris the Emperor gave a fête, and both Mrs. Osbon and myself were anxious to attend. I knew that the official method to gain admission was through our United States Minister, at that time General John A. Dix, an old friend, as the reader may remember. I went up to the Legation, therefore, and meeting the General's son John, told him my mission.

"Well," he said, "you should have made your application about three years ago. They were all spoken for nearly that far ahead. However, you might see my father."

I did see General Dix, and, while he was very cordial, he could do nothing, for he had no more tickets at his disposal.

"Very well," I thought, "I have done the proper thing, anyway; now I'll see what I can do on my own account."

So I sauntered around to the Tuileries and told the chamberlain I should like to attend that ball.

"Certainly. Of course," he said, "I will send you the tickets."

The tickets came, and they *were* tickets, sure enough. The outer envelope was nearly as large as a fore-royal. Within, the tickets gradually reduced in size—each card being for some special permission, until we reached one that admitted to the royal presence.

On the night of the event we were on hand in full regalia, and when the hour came for presentation we purposely formed at the end of the American column. As each person faced the Emperor and Empress, General Dix stood ready to make the presentation. When we came up, at last, he stared at us as much as to say, "How in the name of heaven did you get here?" Then, just as he was about to speak, the Emperor held out his hand.

"I know Captain Osbon very well," he said; and after greeting Mrs. Osbon we passed on.

A day or two later, when I dropped into the Legation, the first greeting I received was,

"Say, Osbon, how did you manage it? Tell us."

"Oh," I said, "that was easy enough. Me an' the Emperor's chums!"

XLVII

Various Enterprises, and Asphalt

IN 1869 I was once more in New York, in the employ of the Old Colony Steamship Company, then owned by Fisk and Gould, as assistant to the managing director. Most of the work was left to me, as my chief, Mr. M. R. Simons, was not a practical steamboat man, and I began at once to harmonise and discipline the crews of the *Bristol* and *Providence,* the crack vessels of Long Island Sound. The *Plymouth Rock,* another vessel, idle at the time, we converted into the first large excursion steamer in these waters. The management of her excursions fell to me, and on the occasion of the International Yacht Races we carried four thousand passengers, bringing every one home safely, though she cracked her shaft during the trip.

The White Star Line now offered me a position at what was considered the very excellent salary of several thousand dollars a year, and I remained with that company until 1871, when I had another attack of the journalistic fever—one never is permanently cured of that complaint—and in July of the same year, on a capital of four hundred dollars, I established the *Nautical Gazette,* an eight-page weekly paper, the first maritime journal of America.

I had a partner at first, but his legs were overlong,

and he wrote on his lap, so after a few months we dissolved. Perhaps his physical characteristics had nothing to do with the fortunes of the paper, but I know that it prospered from the day he went away. In two years the *Nautical Gazette* had a paid circulation of seven thousand regular subscribers and had become a sixteen page paper. Furthermore, I had been elected secretary of the National Board of Steam Navigation, a position which required my presence in Washington during the sessions of Congress, where I represented both the board and my paper, and was associated intimately with almost everyone of importance in political life.

I could make a book of my Washington recollections alone, for in the course of events I was brought into close contact with Grant, Garfield, Arthur, Harrison, McKinley, Zach. Chandler, Conklin, and many others. They are all dead now; but the days when I knew them, and we exchanged stories together, come back, bringing happy memories.

I cannot forego relating one incident, recalled by the names of Chandler and Conkling. Conkling was a man of fine physique, and was proud of his skill as a boxer. He often bantered men to put on the gloves with him, and at a dinner one night induced Senator Chandler to engage in a bout, which naturally ended with the latter's defeat and discomfiture. Chandler, however, bided his time, and somewhat later, when another dinner was on, quietly engaged a professional pugilist to occupy a seat at the table, under the unobtrusive name of Mr. Smith of Michigan.

When the dinner was over, Conkling as usual was

anxious for his favourite exercise, and playfully bantered Senator Chandler to engage him as before.

"No, Conkling," said Chandler, "I'm not in your class. Suppose you try my friend Smith here, of Michigan."

Mr. "Smith" protested that he knew very little of the sport, but Conkling insisted and the gloves were finally donned by both. What happened to Conkling I am hardly prepared to describe. Don Quixote's encounter with a windmill was a small affair in comparison. Mr. Smith danced about him, landing when and where he wished, playing with him as he would with a punching bag. The elegant New York senator was dazed, overwhelmed, humiliated, crushed. When he surrendered and called enough, as he did at last, Senator Chandler smiled blandly and presented the pugilist in his true colours, and Conkling paid the bill.

For thirteen years uninterruptedly I owned and edited the *Nautical Gazette;* then, one autumn, on the way from Washington I was in a train that broke in two, and I received injuries which made it necessary for me to give up all work and go abroad. I did not sell out, but closed up the paper, paying all subscribers and advertisers, resuming publication several months later, fully restored to health.

But I was unfortunate, for a second accident—this time on the elevated railway—once more laid me on my back. I now leased the paper, and subsequently sold it, with which transaction my proprietary journalism came to an end, though I have never ceased to be a contributor to various publications, and am, at the present writing, an associate editor of the *American*

Shipbuilder. The *Nautical Gazette* had various fortunes and owners after my retirement, and still exists, a flourishing publication owned by Crossett & Bates.

My own fortunes were varied and often peculiar after this period. Through Mr. A. D. Bryce-Douglas, an old friend and one of the proprietors of the Fairfield Shipbuilding Works, at Govan, Scotland, Sir William Pierce of Glasgow sent for me to superintend the organisation of a line of steamers between New York and the West Indies. Both Mrs. Osbon and myself were royally entertained by the prospective founders of the new company. At Ardrossan we made our home in the Bryce-Douglas mansion, whence we travelled here and there as invited guests, attending, among other events, the annual games at Windermere Lake, where I renewed my old acquaintance with the Prince of Wales.

I was to become managing director of the new company, and after inspecting the plans for the proposed ships I returned to New York and went down through the West Indies, where I visited every island and arranged for prospective traffic. I then returned to London, established offices, and contracted with Oswald, Mordaunt & Company for the vessels. All the papers were drawn, and, just three days before they were to be signed, Sir William Pierce, our financier, died. The heirs of Sir William did not wish to continue the West Indian Navigation scheme, and I returned to the United States.

Meantime I had made a preliminary contract with the asphalt interests of Venezuela—the famous New

York & Bermudez Company whose private affairs have since become so entangled with politics as to involve the United States in an unsavory public embroglio with the Venezuelan government. Still hoping to build the transportation line, I returned to England, but could effect no satisfactory arrangement. The asphalt people now made me a proposition to go to Guanoco and superintend their plant at that point, also the La Brea & Guanoco Railway. I accepted, and sailed from New York on the steamer *Fontabelle* for my new destination. A number of years had slipped away in various steamship projects and in other more or less successful undertakings, and it was January 11th, 1896, when I left for the now notorious asphalt districts of the south.

My experience as superintendent of the New York & Bermudez Company and of the La Brea & Guanoco Railway was neither very long nor very agreeable. All the petty intrigue and underground politics which have since come to the surface, as it were, of the lakes of pitch were then fermenting, and I did not fancy the process. "Touch pitch and be defiled" is a proverb which would seem to have been especially invented for the asphalt industry. In time, perhaps, the mix-up of companies and politics will be understood and rectified; but my own knowledge of the mess is too limited to undertake a lucid analysis here, and, besides, the public is already weary of the theme.

The asphalt lakes, however, constitute one of the wonders of the world. The largest, La Brea, is about five miles long and three miles wide, and the major portion of it consists of asphalt in its pure state. This

substance is a bituminous vegetable product, like coal, distilled and diffused by some subterranean volcanic agency, and in its liquid state it bubbles and blisters under the fierce tropic sun—literally a lake of pitch.* In places, where it is cooled and hardened, it is covered with tropical vegetation, which has to be cut away before the asphalt can be removed. The supply seems inexhaustible, and no matter how much is taken out, within a short time the hole fills and the level of the lake is restored. Whether the supply is really never-ending, time alone can tell.

A narrow strip of land but a few yards wide, and upon which there was then a growth of trees, separates this lake from another, Lake Felicidad—the two being probably connected somewhere in the depths. On one side is a range of mountains, on the other, in close proximity, the Guanoco River. Above and below are pampas, or muddy swamp plains, extending on the northward to the Gulf of Paria. It is a weird, sinister locality—a place for unhealthy ambitions and unnatural schemes.

Perhaps I should say a few words here as to the method of handling this strange merchandise. The workmen employed during my administration ranged in number from one hundred to three hundred West India negroes and native Venezuelans, about equally divided. Vessels were chartered and sent to Guanoco to bring coal for the locomotives, piles for wharfage and various supplies—the vessels to be returned with cargoes of asphalt ranging in bulk from five hundred to eight hundred tons. Cars which brought the asphalt from the lakes held about one ton each, and to prevent

* The Spanish name *La Brea* signifies pitch.

the pitch from sticking to the sides they were washed with a coat of mud. The bodies of the cars were hoisted from the trucks and the contents dumped into the ship's hold, in bulk. Great care had to be exercised in confining the asphalt, for if it shifted it was likely to put a vessel on her beam ends. It was a peculiar business, throughout, and I was not unhappy, when, at the end of September, 1896, my connection with it ceased.

XLVIII

A Mysterious White Race

I WAS glad, however, of my Guanoco experience, which certainly was a new one to me, and I was interested in acquainting myself with the aborigines of this portion of the globe. These are of two distinct kinds—the first being a few tribes of the ordinary Venezuela Indians, who live in swamps and sleep in hammocks made fast to trees, with no other covering than a few palm leaves, during the rainy season—the other race being the strange White Indians of Venezuela, of whom so little has been written or is known, even by natives of the country. As it became my fortune to meet and to see something of a number of these wonderful people, it seems worth while to make more than a passing mention of them here.

From my arrival in Venezuela I had heard marvellous tales concerning them, how they dwelt in a fertile valley, surrounded by lofty mountains—living at peace with the world, because they refused to mingle with the people of the world or to allow anyone not of their own race to enter their domain. They were said to be by no means a bloodthirsty people—quite the contrary, in fact—but strong to resist invasion, nature having aided them in maintaining their seclusion. Passing up the San Juan River, the casual observer

would never notice the mouth of a small navigable creek concealed by overhanging tropic foliage. Yet this is their gateway, and a little way above, a guard —all that is needed for the narrow place—permits none but the strange white natives to pass.

What lies beyond, in that fabulous valley of seclusion, none but themselves have ever seen. Yet such are the reports of marvels there, that more than one man has risked his life, and lost it, perhaps, in attempting to enter this forbidden land. It is said that war, famine, and pestilence are unknown within its borders; that stores of priceless jewels are there, such as the world has never known; that all of their domestic utensils are fashioned of beaten gold. I don't see how men have ever learned these things, when nobody has ever been there, and when the people themselves will have nothing to say of their affairs. Perhaps at some time in the past a member of the race has looked with eyes of love upon a maiden of the outer world and forsaken his country, and told its traditions. It could not have been the other way around, for no maiden of the race has ever been allowed outside of the happy valley.

At all events, these are the reports. What we know is, that they weave the most marvellous hammocks in the world—hammocks of a net and filament so fine, yet so strong and expansive, that one may wrap it around and around the body in a countless envelopment of folds until one is sheathed and enshrouded in a perfect cocoon. They have very little outside traffic beyond this hammock industry—the latter, when I was there, being carried on through the comandante del

Rio, General Brito, who had won a measure of their confidence. To General Brito they turned over their hammocks which, sold in Trinidad, were converted into Winchester rifles, ammunition and certain articles of clothing. The rifles were chief in importance, which would indicate that the people of mystery have recognised the use of modern arms, and though peaceful are prepared to resist any probable invasion.

I may add that there is a tale of some long ago expedition—perhaps of the early Spanish days—that attempted to enter the forbidden valley only to be repulsed with such ghastly slaughter that the effort was never repeated; the only undertaking of the kind, since, having been a project on the part of the Venezuelan Government to gain entry on a plea of taking the census of this unregistered tribe. The Venezuelan officials first pleaded with and then threatened the guards at the little river gateway. Then they came away strong in the conviction that it was better to keep their own names on the census rolls than to try to carry the blessings of civilisation into the happy valley. Its inhabitants could go uncounted to the crack of doom for all they cared; they probably wouldn't be interested in asphalt and revolution, anyhow.

During my residence in Venezuela I saw two parties of these strange people, each party consisting of seven persons in charge of General Brito. We were building some small huts (*ranches*) for the workmen, and needed a quantity of *temeche* palm for thatching. We finally contracted with General Brito to build a number of these huts and thatch them, complete. When the frames were ready, he left and went up the river,

returning a few days later with a very large *curiara* or canoe (fashioned from a great single log), loaded like a hay boat with the *temeche,* and manned by seven unusual-looking white men.

There were several hundred employees at our works, yet none of them had ever seen such men as these before. Curiosity ran high, for they wore what resembled European clothing, and we all knew there were no white strangers in our neighbourhood. Besides, no white men of our race were ever so adept at using a paddle as these. When the canoe grounded and General Brito came ashore, I said to him:

"Who and what are those men?"

"Those," said General Brito, "are some of the famous White Indians of Venezuela. I have contracted with them for the *temeche,* and persuaded them to bring it here. I thought you might like to see a few specimens of this race."

I watched them intently while they unloaded their craft, which they did in a brisk, busy way, saying not a single word during the operation. Then by Brito's invitation they pulled their canoe up high and dry on the shore and gathered around him.

I had an excellent opportunity to study their physical characteristics, and I think I was never so impressed by any human beings. In the first place they were absolutely different from any people I had ever seen. They were white, it is true, but it was not the white of the Caucasian, nor yet the pallor of the arsenic eater, or of disease. It was a strange, indescribable white that would attract attention anywhere, and, though so unusual, did not repel. In their cheeks

there was a pinkish hue, but their skin showed no tan or burn, such as one is led to expect in that fierce climate, where the thermometer ranges at from 122° to 130° at midday.

Their features were well formed and regular. They had moderately high foreheads; full, round, but keen, eyes; well formed noses; mouths indicating firmness; beautiful ears; well rounded chins. Their hair was coal-black, but not coarse. In figure they were graceful and of medium height, with a weight of perhaps one hundred and forty-five pounds. They stood erect and were apparently of great strength. Their hands and feet were well formed and seemed small.

Their clothing, as I have said, was European. It had been purchased in Port of Spain, evidently, and the wearers seemed quite at home in it, though it was General Brito's belief that such attire was never worn inside their own domain. It was put on for contact with the outside world, and then only by a few. Such native dress as he had seen was very simple, and was not unlike that worn by the darker tribes. What was the female attire, he could not guess, as never in all his forty years' experience in that district had he seen a woman of this white race, nor a female child. He knew little of their language, and absolutely nothing of their manners and customs, except that they had learned the use of firearms and tobacco.

You may imagine how intently I studied the little group, while these curious people in turn showed a certain mild interest in us and our surroundings. We tried to get them to ride up to the superintendent's house on the train, but they preferred to walk rather

than trust themselves behind a locomotive. They entered the building, however, and were taken through the various departments, the office, the kitchen, and the store, all of which seemed to give them a quiet pleasure. In the store we treated them to some refreshments and cigars, both of which they took without reserve. Then we showed them the carpenter shops; also the wharf, where vessels were being loaded. They went aboard one of the vessels and walked about the decks, gazed up at the lofty spars and down into the hatchways, but they could not be persuaded to go into the hold or the cabin. After two or three hours with us they pushed their *curiara* off the river bank, and seizing their paddles were soon out of sight around a bend of the river, homeward bound.

About a week later General Brito brought down another load of *temeche* palm with another, and entirely different, crew of the strange people. They behaved precisely like their predecessors, and in a brief space disappeared into their mysterious seclusion and we saw them no more. General Brito said that he had never seen any sign of gold or treasure among them, and he thought the stories told were largely mythical. It was possible, he thought, that they might have certain jewels and articles of gold and silver, used for ornament or religious service, but he believed it unlikely that domestic implements would be fashioned of any precious metal, for they knew its value and would use their surplus to supply their needs. Yet it is just possible that in their wisdom they have never let any sign of their mineral wealth appear, realising that to do so would excite the cupidity of the cruel

conquering race which has destroyed every other aboriginal nation of the South, and incite a struggle which would end in their own extinction. For one, I sincerely hope that through ages to come they may maintain the peace and seclusion of their happy valley.

XLIX

Locating Cervera's Fleet

I REMAINED for a considerable time in South America after severing my connection with the Bermudez company, engaged in various undertakings. Eventually I went to Caracas, thence to Carupano, where I remained several months, making a survey of a railroad route to the vast sulphur deposits there, also of the deposits themselves and of the harbour of Carupano—a chart of which was published by the United States Hydrographic Office at Washington, and for which the Government of Venezuela very kindly decorated me with the order of the Bust of the Liberator.

Meantime, war between the United States and Spain had been brewing, the *Maine* was blown up in Havana Harbour, and the Spanish fleet commanded by Admiral Cervera was somewhere on the water—knowledge of its exact locality being the most important bit of information which could be supplied to the United States Government and the American people, especially to those residing near the coast.

I had a theory concerning the movements of these vessels, deduced from my long experience at sea, my acquaintance with the needs and operations of such ships, and my knowledge of the various harbours and bases of supply absolutely necessary to their support.

I had, further, a plan for passenger-steamer scouting, by which I believed the enemy could be more carefully observed and reported without exciting suspicion than from any naval vessel. There were passenger steamers that made every port of supply available to the Spanish Fleet. I decided to undertake such a tour of observation, and tendered my services by letter to the Navy Department at Washington. The authorities appeared somewhat doubtful of my plan, at first, but on May 11th (1898) I was supplied by Secretary John D. Long with the necessary credentials, with orders to report by wire through our consuls.

In the meantime I had been doing some detective work in port. I casually interviewed every man that came to Caracas from the West Indies, but found only one who claimed he had seen the Spanish Fleet, and that a long time before.

I did at last, however, find a genuine source of information in the valet of the Spanish Minister at Caracas. The valet by no means confided anything to me direct, but he was shaved in a barber shop kept by a Frenchman, and from the earliest dawn of history the barber has been noted no less for his ability to acquire information than for his soothing and loquacious distribution of such knowledge. I believe this particular barber meant to be discreet, but we were very good friends, and he did love to talk, especially as I made it a point to shave with great frequency—as often as twice a day sometimes—and was not ungenerous in the matter of fees.

I never met the valet personally, but I manufactured information which I knew would be repeated to him,

and which could not fail to elicit something of value in the way of reply. Thus, in a manner, I rigged a long-range suction pump on him, and little came into the Legation at Caracas that did not find its way through the barber into my reservoir of knowledge. I learned, what I had suspected, that Cervera's fleet was bound for the West Indies, also at what points the vessels were expected to coal. This was important, but not sufficiently exact as to the matter of time. Perhaps I should mention in passing that there were some anxious days and nights in Caracas about this period. A rumour became current that the Spaniards had planned to massacre every Yankee in the city—a little bunch of less than forty souls, all told—and for a while the American contingent was considerably disturbed, especially as President Andrade thought it necessary to place an armed guard around the United States Legation.

On May 12th I went prospecting to La Guayra, and after locating Mrs. Osbon, who was me, at the Hotel Neptuno, I met a little coloured boy whom I had known at Guanoco, and who was now in the cable office at La Guayra. Here was an unexpected mine of information. The cable operators talked among themselves, and my little coloured friend overheard much that was going on. I presented him with a silver dollar and told him what I wanted to know. That evening he met me by appointment, and I learned from him where the *Ristormel*—a collier loaded with four thousand tons of coal, was expected to meet Cervera's fleet. Knowing the marine geography of the coast as I did, and all the possibilities and probabilities of navigation

in that part of the world, I felt sure now that I could, without great difficulty, locate the missing fleet.

I went out next morning, and secured passage north in the Dutch steamer, *Prins Frederick Heinrick,* Captain Neiman, which would call at Curaçao, Jacmel, Aux Cayes, and Port au Prince. At one of these ports, or en route, I felt certain that we should find the Spanish ships. I immediately telephoned to Mr. Loomis, then our minister at Caracas, that I was going north in the Dutch boat, and he informed me that a messenger would come down on the three o'clock train with despatches.

It was six o'clock on the evening of Friday, May 13th, that we sailed from La Guayra—an unlucky combination in the matter of dates, one might think; but this time the evil charm which is supposed to be attached to Friday and the thirteenth day failed to work. Perhaps as two negatives make a positive, so the very combination of two bad omens makes a good one. At all events, it was a calm, pleasant night, and there was a congenial company aboard the little Dutch vessel. Among the passengers were three American boys named Davis, upon whom I felt I could rely if I needed any assistance in carrying out my plans. I concluded, however, that it was too early to expect developments that night, and I retired early saying nothing to anyone. Nevertheless, I had a strong sailor presentiment that on the next day there would be something to see or hear.

At five next morning I was awake, and partly dressing myself, went on deck. The dim outline of the Island of Curaçao appeared on the horizon, but too

dim and far away to reveal anything in the way of vessels there. I went below and was in the act of shaving when I heard the man on watch report a sail off the starboard beam. I hurried on deck and met the captain, who said there was some smoke to the eastward. I went below again, finished my toilet, and going out on deck, ascended the rigging. Looking away to the eastward I saw the smoke of a squadron. The captain called up,

"Those are English vessels, going from San Lucia to Jamaica."

"Not much!" I called back; "those are Spanish ships. That is Cervera's fleet!"

Increasing daylight and lessening distance established my claim. I knew the names of the vessels, and before long could recognise them from their pictures. There were the *Maria Teresa,* the *Viscaya,* the *Oquendo,* the *Cristobal Colon,* and the two torpedo boats, *Furor* and *Pluton*—a third, the *Terror,* having been crippled and left behind at Guadeloupe. To see them thus was to me a beautiful sight. They did not look beautiful when I saw them at closer range, but distance concealed their unsightliness, and moreover they were glorified to me in the fact that my scouting theory was so promptly justified, and that I had located the game. All the machinery of the Government had been put into service to discover the Spanish Fleet, and now here it was under my very eyes. A cable to Washington, and a nervous nation would know the truth.

As we drew nearer I made a careful survey of the vessels, their armament, their draft of water—which

told me how light they were with coal—the character of their crews, and their appearance in general. I began to see now that they were less beautiful than I had at first thought them, though it was not until we were directly upon them that the fulness of their sad condition became apparent.

Meantime, the officers in a pilot boat had entered the Harbour to arrange for the admission of the vessels. Cervera desired that two of his ships should be permitted to enter for the twenty-four hour limit, and then two more, for the *Ristormel,* the collier, had thus far not effected a conjunction with him and his need was very great. Two vessels only, his flagship, *Maria Teresa,* and the *Viscaya,* were accorded the privilege. The Davis boys made photographs as the vessels passed in—probably the last ever taken of the Spanish ships.

I was the first passenger ashore at Curaçao, eager to get in touch with Washington so that Sampson or Schley might be sent swooping down upon the enemy. I had my cablegram all ready, with full details as to the condition and needs of the vessels, all of which was most important, as it would enable our experts to calculate precisely on the force necessary to oppose them, as well as upon probable movements. Our consul, Mr. Smith, however, was a man of commercial rather than military instincts, and having informed me that he had already forwarded the facts of the fleet's arrival, thought that sufficient. A cable from Mr. Loomis settled the matter, and my report was forwarded, forthwith.

I had by this time communicated the fact of my special mission to the three Davis boys and enlisted

their aid, which they gave with patriotic eagerness. I found that our consul owned the only coal pile of any value on the island, and that it was feared pressure might be brought to bear upon him to dispose of it, if not to the Spaniards, at least to some one who would direct its course toward the bunkers of the Spanish fleet. Without hesitation, therefore, I posted one of the Davis boys as a guard on the coal pile, and warned the consul that any disposal of the coal by which it would be transferred to Cervera's vessels would be reported to the authorities at Washington. I am afraid he was not very pleasant over the matter; but he refrained from violence, and our guard proved effective.

The other two Davis boys acted as scouts, and I also enlisted the services of some patriotic friends in Curaçao. Among us we kept near to all the Spanish officers who came ashore, listening closely to their talk, with the hope of getting a clue to their next destination. They were very careful, however. They talked freely of various points in the West Indies, all of which I knew to be out of the question for them—only once letting fall the name of Santiago.

This was their most accessible harbour, and the fact that they spoke the name but once and then immediately avoided it, convinced me that Santiago was to be their final haven. I promptly added another cable to this effect, but I have every reason to believe that it was never sent. If it was, I have been unable to learn of the fact. Consul Smith is dead now, and I would not for the world do him an injustice; but it was my opinion, and it was the opinion of many in Curaçao, that he had been in tropical latitudes so long

and had so many commercial interests there, that he was not in full sympathy with the nation he officially served.

Meantime, the *Maria Teresa* and the *Viscaya* were laying in needed supplies. Lighters loaded with provision and the refuse of a coal pile—the only fuel outside of Smith's in Curaçao—were moving to and fro, making good use of the time limit. Well for them that they had even this grace, for their need was indeed bitter. While we had been lying outside, waiting for a pilot, we had a fine opportunity to examine our enemy at close range. That they *were* our enemy, made it needful that we should do all in our power to oppose and circumvent them, but I can tell you there was not even mirth in my heart as I regarded the pitiable condition of the Spanish Fleet.

The line of vessels that had presented so grand an appearance as they steamed up on our starboard beam became only a wretched looking lot of iron hulks when viewed at a distance of a hundred yards. A vessel in perfect condition is a beautiful thing; but on the other hand when she looks "tough" she looks "awful tough," and of all the "tough" vessels I have ever seen, those of Cervera were the worst.

Being so light, they rolled heavily and revealed bottoms fouled thickly with weeds and barnacles. Above the water line they already had the general appearance of the scrap iron which they were doomed to become. As for the crews, they were gaunt, listless, and hollow-eyed with hunger, with never a smile on the faces of either officers or men. In fact, there was something almost uncanny about the appearance of those vessels

and their crews. They were like the ghosts of vessels and men, long at the bottom of the sea. A mournful sight they were, making manifest a naval poverty such as I had never imagined. To prophesy anything for them but defeat was to excite derision. They were not even a forlorn hope. Men and vessels, they were doomed.

During Cervera's stay in Curaçao cablegrams from Spain and Cuba were constantly coming, and early on Sunday afternoon a message reached him which caused him to prepare for immediate departure. Coaling ceased and even some of the livestock, though already paid for, was not taken aboard. Men were summoned, boats hoisted, and the *Viscaya* and *Maria Teresa* steamed slowly down the harbour, to be joined outside by the remainder of the fleet. I posted a lookout on the highest point of the island to watch the ships so long as they were visible. Evidently they were steaming for the little island of Bon-Aire, where they would transfer some of their supplies, and where they perhaps still hoped to meet the missing *Ristormel.* I felt certain that Santiago was their destination. They had too little coal to try for Cienfuegos or Havana, and, besides, there was the constant danger of meeting Sampson or Schley.

I tried to prevail upon Consul Smith to let me use a small Dominican steamer which he controlled to follow the fleet at a respectful distance and make certain of its course; but my request was refused, with the result that Cervera did make Santiago unseen, and for a time lay safely hidden in that port.

Our own vessel, the *Prins Fredrick Heinrick,* sailed

from Curaçao Monday afternoon, and all the way to the North I and my faithful assistants, William, Clive, and Clare Davis, did scout duty, keeping watch, night and day, and making diligent inquiries in different ports. We accomplished nothing further, however, and arriving in New York I placed a detailed report in the hands of the United States despatch agent in the Post Office building, and went home for a needed rest. A few days later I received the Department's acknowledgment and thanks.* I had expected no other reward. I did receive, however, from *Leslie's Weekly* a modest sum in payment for a brief account of the matter, published June 23d; and in this I prophesied that the battle which followed ten days later might be desperate, but that it would be short, as, indeed, it was. When we saw those vessels disappear below the horizon at Curaçao we knew that they went to certain annihilation.

* WASHINGTON, June 3d, 1898.

SIR:—The Department received your letter of the 28th ultimo, reporting your observations of the Spanish Fleet off and in the port of Curaçao, and detailing your work as a volunteer scout while on your way to New York. The Department appreciates your patriotic interest in this matter, and thanks you for your very interesting report.

Very respectfully,
CHAS. H. ALLEN,
Acting Secretary,

Mr. B. S. Osbon,
No. 15 Whitehall St., New York City.

L

In a Quiet Harbour

THE destruction of Cervera's fleet occurred at Santiago de Cuba, July 3d, 1898. During the following month the Spanish-American war ended, and with it closed my last participation in naval affairs. There has been no opportunity for action of any sort since then, and, besides, the reader of a mathematical turn of mind will perhaps have calculated that I was already, in 1898, beyond the Scriptural age limit allowed to man in these latter days, and hence, though still hale and brisk, I am no longer considered so available for active duties of the service. My later years have been passed in comparative quiet, and in an effort to live comfortably on such modest means as have been at my command.

As I recall my life now, after thus passing it in review, the incidents seem to crowd one upon the other so rapidly that I wonder sometimes where I have found room for them all. Yet they were all there, and there have been others which I have not found space to recount. Perhaps I should have made some reference to the half-dozen books and pamphlets I have compiled from time to time, for though they did not seem to me of any special importance at the moment of publication, I realise now that they were not without a place and purpose. One volume, a "Hand-

book of the Navy" *—a list of every naval vessel then in existence, and a brief history of the same—was used by the Navy Department in considerable numbers, and is still, I believe, accepted as authority for that period. Another little book, "The Deviation of the Compass," was regarded as useful by mariners, and had a satisfactory sale.

Then I suppose I should make some record of certain posts of honour which in the course of events have fallen to my share. In 1890 I was elected captain of the Naval Veterans, at their annual encampment in Boston—in 1891 commodore, and in 1892 rear admiral of the association, filling each office for the period of one year. During this time I was also nominated for the office of junior vice department commander of the New York State Grand Army, losing the election by six votes. On the following year I was nominated again, but, through some jealousy then existing, a report was circulated that I was not eligible, it being declared that I was never on the roll books of the Navy.† I had no desire to fill the office after that, but as an answer to my detractors I obtained letters from officials and a number of my old shipmates, and these, with a few other credentials which I had pre-

* "Osbon's Handbook of the Navy." D. Van Nostrand & Co., N. Y., 1864.

† DEPARTMENT OF YARDS AND DOCKS.
NAVY YARD, BOSTON, MASS., Aug. 20th, 1892.
Captain B. S. OSBON,
New York City.
DEAR SIR AND SHIPMATE:
It gives me great pleasure to bear honourable testimony as to your services on the *Hartford* from January to May 1862

served, I compiled in a small leaflet, after which I was annoyed no more in that direction. My effort has been only to serve well, and as senior officer of the Naval Veterans I had the good fortune to be able to further the publication of the "Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies," a work not yet complete, but being now well and handsomely issued.

It also fell to my lot to organise the parade which

as Flag Officer Farragut's Clerk and Signal Officer. I remember distinctly the zeal and energy you displayed and the commendations you received from Farragut on a number of different occasions, but especially on the night we passed Forts Jackson and St. Phillip. You were always ready for duty, whenever any expedition or reconnaissance was being set on foot. You certainly did your whole duty while you were an appointed officer on board of the *Hartford* and it affords me pleasure to make these statements.

Yours very truly,
ALBERT KAUTZ,
Captain U. S. N.

U. S. STEAMER, *SAN FRANCISCO*,
FLAGSHIP OF THE PACIFIC STATION.
HONOLULU, H. I., July 17th, 1892.

Commodore B. S. OSBON,
National Association of Naval Veterans,
United States, New York City.

DEAR SIR AND SHIPMATE (*in former days*):

I regret that any one has questioned the fact of your having served your country in battle, and am glad to be able to say that you were with us when we passed Forts Jackson and St. Phillip when the City of New Orleans was held by the Navy, that you were then Flag Officer Farragut's Clerk and also personally attended to the signals. We were shipmates, and you left the *Hartford* with a grand reputation. Captain Kautz is Captain of the Yard at Boston, and he will also be able to certify to your services, also Mr. Herbert Tyson of Philadelphia. I have heard of your excellent record since you left the *Hartford*. Rear Admiral Irwin, U. S. N., at present commandant of the Mare

escorted the body of John Ericsson to the iron vessel, the *Baltimore,* that was to bear him to his native Sweden, and when the Saint Gaudens bronze statue of Farragut was erected in Madison Square, Mrs. Farragut, with her thoughtful kindness, asked me, as his old signal officer at New Orleans, to be present, and, at the moment of her unveiling the statue, which was

Island Navy Yard, remembers you in Dupont's squadron and I think by your request will write you a letter. It is annoying to have any doubt upon one's War Record but any attempt to deny your having been under fire in the passage of the Forts with Farragut must recoil.

Yours very truly,
As a shipmate of war times, and a Naval Veteran,
J. C. WATSON,
Captain U. S. N.

147 PIERREPONT ST., BROOKLYN, June 28th, 1892.

Captain B. S. OSBON.

DEAR SIR:

I have received your letter and am quite astonished to hear of any question being raised in regard to your services during the War of the Rebellion. I feel provoked to write anything about a matter which is so well known to your great credit, and knowing of your services in the U. S. Flagship *Hartford* as I do I feel the most profound contempt for those who have caused you any annoyance. The idea now in '92 to question your services 41 years after the war began. You were Admiral Farragut's Clerk and Signal Officer. At Pilot Town, mouth of the Mississippi, you assisted in hoisting the flag there. At the battles of Forts Jackson and St. Phillip, you hoisted by order of Farragut the signal for the attack to begin, and during that ever memorable battle when the *Hartford* was aground and on fire you did all you could to allay the excitement among some of the men, and extinguished the fire. The next day, April 25th, at the battle of Chalmette you were very active in the performance of your duty signalling and carrying messages to the division officers at the great guns, myself among that number. At Carrollton above New Orleans I saw you leave our ship with a

draped with American colours, to hoist the admiral's flag on a little flag staff which had been erected by its side.

Thus I was to render a final homage to the man I had served and honoured in life, who in that noble bronze stands there at the corner of Madison Square Park looking out over the heads of the passers-by, just as I have seen him standing amid flame and battle-smoke looking toward New Orleans, determined to

force which went on shore to capture the rebel guns and burn the gun carriages which the rebels left in their batteries, as we had to leave there and did not wish the rebels to return and obtain their guns during our absence. I saw you go with the Admiral, then Flag Officer, before the battle of New Orleans, on a reconnaissance in a small steamer, the *Iroquois*, and while on that duty you were under a heavy fire from both Forts Jackson and St. Phillip. If the "bummers" who have maligned you were ever under such a fire as that, I really believe they would be like the frog in the fable, burst with self-importance. After you left the ship honourably, I heard of you during the entire duration of the war. I have no more to say except that you give my compliments to your enemies and tell them to go to Hades.

Yours truly,

JOHN L. BROOME,
Lieutenant Colonel, U. S. Marines.

NAVY PAY OFFICE.

NEW YORK, June 24th, 1892.

This is to certify that the records of this office show that Bradley S. Osbon, Flag Officer's Clerk of the West Gulf Blockading Squadron, was paid Prize Money for captures made at New Orleans by said Squadron.

A. J. CLARK,
Pay Director, U. S. Navy (in charge).

NAVY DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON, D. C., July 20th, 1892.

SIR: Referring to your letter requesting information in regard to your appointment, service and discharge as Clerk of the late

fulfil orders, to carry out his undertaking, regardless of shot and shell. That was David Farragut's chief characteristic—to fulfil orders. He was a God-fearing, gentle-hearted, noble man, averse to shedding blood, but before all he was a sailor in the service of his country and he let nothing stand between him and victory. It was so at New Orleans—it was so later at Mobile where, unhappily, because of a wasting fever, I could not be with him. Yet I can understand how he looked there, and just how his voice sounded when he said, "Damn the torpedoes! Go ahead on the engines!" I have seen the look and I have heard the voice—and now as I pass that statue I never fail to recall the night between the forts, and I lift my hat in honour of the man to whom death was nothing—to whom his nation's cause was all.

On the 17th of June, 1895, I commanded the fleet of vessels in the water parade on the occasion of the opening of the Harlem Ship Canal, leading over one hundred vessels of all types through the canal without

Admiral Farragut, U. S. Navy, in the year 1862, I have to inform you that it appears from an examination of the records that you were appointed Flag Officer's Clerk for duty on board the U. S. S. *Hartford* January 20th, 1862, and you resigned said appointment April 30, 1862. In view of the facts stated and of the commendations subsequently made by Admiral Farragut of your conduct during the engagement which resulted in the capture of New Orleans, your service under the above-named appointment appears to have honourably terminated on the date of your resignation.

Yours very respectfully,
B. F. Tracy,
Secretary of the Navy.

To Mr. B. S. Osbon,
New York.

an accident or a moment's delay, a feat highly commended by naval officers and the public press.

And so we have reached the end of our long way. And a long way it is, for it began far back in another century, while just a little beyond the horizon is the signal buoy that will tally four score years. I voyage now in quiet and familiar waters. The compass no longer points to unknown harbours, over uncharted seas. The course is no longer marked by the flash of cutlass and the roar of guns. Like any other craft of a vanished time, I have been retired from the fiercer action of the front, trying to be content with the memories of the vanished days. Yet the smell of powder puts it all before me and makes me long sometimes for the flash and roar of battle—to feel the deck lift and rock to the thunder of heavy guns. Perhaps the old craft may be good for another voyage yet—something with just enough of the flavour of conquest and adventure to set one's pulse going and make him forget the years.

But a few blocks away from my present snug harbour, at the foot of Twenty-fourth Street, New York City, is moored another old craft—a friend of my youth—the sloop of war, *St. Mary's*. The reader may recall how I first met her at Honolulu, and how we helped her to defend Hawaii from the Frenchmen, so long ago. She is a school ship now, and often I go down to visit her, and talk to the boys, who, I think, are always glad to see me, and to hear my sailor yarns. The *St. Mary's* is of my time and kind—the sort of a vessel I know and love best. To me, of course, the new

ships and the new commanders can never be as the old ships and the old commanders. Yet the new ships compel my wonder and admiration—the new commanders will as bravely guard the nation's welfare, maintain its honour, and keep the old flag flying on every sea.

In every war our Navy has been the nation's pride. During the early days of the great Civil struggle, when the Confederate Commodore Barron—captured at Hatteras and confined at Fort Warren—heard of the Port Royal affair, he forgot for a moment his change of heart, and jumping up, exclaimed: "I tell you, nothing can stand against our Navy!"

Commodore Barron was right—nothing can—nothing ever did stand against the American Navy. It is my humble opinion that so long as our nation remains united and free, nothing ever will.

THE END